

STUDIES IN PERSIAN CULTURAL HISTORY

**ALEXANDER
HISTORIES
AND IRANIAN
REFLECTIONS**

Remnants of Propaganda
and Resistance

Parivash Jamzadeh

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Alexander Histories and Iranian Reflections

Studies in Persian Cultural History

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By

Parivash Jamzadeh



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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

*This book is dedicated to the memory of my parents:
Dr. Shahjahan Jamzadeh & Hodayun Khosravi-Jamzadeh*

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INTRODUCTION

Alexander was a Macedonian who conquered the Achaemenid empire and sought legitimacy as its king. Although his campaigns had started under the slogan of punishing Xerxes' descendants for his invasion of Greece, gradually the focus shifted to displays of sensitivity towards the Iranian cultural norms, even at the expense of alienating his close Greek and Macedonian allies at some point.

This expedient policy may be due to the difficulties encountered, especially in facing other more legitimate contenders. Those contenders include not only Darius III himself, whose accounts are recorded in the same Alexander Histories and elsewhere and reveal him to be a worthy opponent, but also other Achaemenids, whom Plutarch refers to as "the constant succession of petty kings and their repeated treachery".¹ The consequence is the realization of the need for a propaganda endeavour.

The traces of this effort—besides Alexander's overt actions towards 'Iranization', clearly recorded in the sources—survive in the histories certain instances revealing direct translations from Iranian originals, while at the same time the residues of a counter-propaganda effort are also seen in the histories, again manifesting Iranian hands.

These two lines run through the accounts as echoes of stories or episodes with distinct Iranian cultural and religious colourings intended for an Iranian audience.² However, it is important to note that the mentioned counter-propaganda surviving in the midst of the Alexander Histories is independent of the later Zoroastrian literature, in which Alexander is clearly cast as a villain.

Interestingly in certain instances a conflation of the accounts of the two kings, Darius and Alexander, is encountered, affecting even the Zoroastrian literature, in a case. Reaching out to Iranian cultural imports in order to establish legitimate power is not limited to mere outward propaganda. Alexander is, in fact, seen to undergo transformations and adopt Iranian norms and

¹ Plutarch, *Moralia* 327 c, 341 F, trans. F.C. Babbitt, Vol. IV, Cambridge, 1962, pp. 387, 469.

² For mention of Alexander's Iranian allies see *The History of al-Tabari*, Vol. IV, trans. M. Perlmann, New York, 1987, p. 88 (694).

customs. While under the rule of his successors Iran gradually experienced Hellenism, for Alexander himself the process seems reversed. This study claims that even evidence of profound religious reverence can be gleaned from the histories.

The histories mention participation of the Magi in certain ceremonies. At the same time there is record of their mistreatment by Alexander in relation to the desecration of Cyrus' tomb.

Alexander's recourse to religious ceremonies, motifs and claim of Zoroastrian deities' support would have required the Magi's co-operation, albeit neither whole heartedly nor by all, hence perhaps the resentment seen in the later Zoroastrian literature, although the different political climate of later periods would also have provided other factors for demonizing Alexander as the historical founder of Hellenism in Iran.

Alexander commenced his campaign in 334 BC at the age of twenty-two which ended with his death in 323 BC in Babylon. It is noteworthy that neither he nor his body ever returned home. His accounts were recorded by a number of historians and historiographers of his time.³ None of which survive independent of later histories, and some only as scattered fragments in later sources.⁴ What has come to be known as Alexander Histories are the works of historians living centuries after his time compiled from earlier records. The earliest is Diodorus of Sicily who dates from the third quarter of the first century BC.⁵

It is also important to note that some of the histories are in Latin but based on no longer extant Greek sources that were first written after Alexander's death in 323 BC.

The Greek *Anabasis of Alexander* by Arrian (dated to the second century AD) is generally considered to be the most reliable surviving account. Its sources according to the author had been formed primarily by the histories of Ptolemy and Aristobulus, contemporaries of Alexander but

³ A.B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire, the Reign of Alexander the Great*, Cambridge 1988 (henceforth: Bosworth, 1988a), p. 295 f.; W. Heckel & J.C. Yardley, *Alexander the Great, Historical Texts in Translation*, Blackwell, 2004 (henceforth: Heckel & Yardley 2004), pp. xx f.

⁴ F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (FGrH), Berlin & Leiden, 1923; C.A. Robinson, *The History of Alexander the Great*, Vol. I, Providence, 1953.

⁵ A.B. Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander, Studies in Historical Interpretation*, Oxford, 1988 (henceforth: Bosworth, 1988b), p. 1; Heckel & Yardley 2004, p. xxii.

writing after his death,⁶ and secondarily by Nearchus and Eratosthenes.⁷ Therefore, one can see that some four centuries separates Arrian from his sources.

A shorter time span, but nevertheless noteworthy, applies to the Latin histories, separating them from their original Greek sources. Considering this state of affairs, one cannot but admire the labour spent on the preservation of the centuries old manuscripts, having been copied and recopied over time. One wonders how the originals were allowed to perish—and also to be translated into Latin. This is especially true of Justin's book. The original author of this history is a Romanized Gaul named Pompeius Trogus who sometime in the late first century BC had written the history of Alexander in the eleventh and twelfth books of his now lost forty-four volumes long world history, called *Historiae Philippicae*.⁸ Some two centuries later, around 200 AD, Marcus Junianus Justinus (Justin) during his stay at Rome takes up this history of forty-four books and rewrites it, generally said to have epitomized it, omitting or compressing parts that in his judgement were not interesting or of use as examples.⁹ It is believed that in certain parts Justin had intruded into Trogus' text, adding certain information.¹⁰ It is also most significant to note that seemingly the original Latin history of Trogus itself had been an abridgement of previous works that were based on "All that the historians of Greece had undertaken separately, according to what was suitable to each, Trogus Pompeius omitting only what was useless, has put together in one narration, everything being assigned to its proper period, and arranged in the regular order of events".¹¹ Therefore, the original Trogus seems to be a translation as well as a re-editing of his sources. Moreover, his work has been characterized as "Writing in Latin a history with a non-Roman perspective".¹² Also recent scholarship has identified some of his sources, ascribing a section that we shall later examine—7.2.1–4, with emphasis on this study's thesis—

⁶ Arrian, Bk. I. 1.

⁷ Bosworth, 1988b, p. 13.

⁸ Heckel & Yardley 2004, p. xxii.

⁹ *Justin, Cornelius Nepos; and Eutropius*, trans. J.S. Watson, 1897, London, Preface, p. 2; J.C. Yardley & W. Heckel, Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, Vol. I, BKS 11–12: *Alexander the Great*, Oxford, 1997, p. 1.

¹⁰ Yardley & Heckel 1997, pp. 11 f.

¹¹ Justin, Preface, pp. 1–2.

¹² Yardley & Heckel 1997, p. 16.

to Macedonian historians, Marsyas Macedon or Marsyas Philippi, whose work would have contained more folkloric material.¹³

Quintus Curtius Rufus' Latin history of Alexander is in ten books, dated to the first century AD. The first two books and parts of Books 5, 6 and 10 are missing.¹⁴ His primary source as well as that of Diodorus and Trogus/Justin is believed to have been Cleitarchus.¹⁵ The same source seems to have formed the back bone of the narrative of Plutarch's biography of Alexander,¹⁶ writing in the first century AD.¹⁷

Cleitarchus of Alexandria's history of Alexander seems to have been twelve books long covering Alexander's entire reign. It had been written early, before 310 BC, and mainly based on others' reports of the campaigns, since he himself had not been present.¹⁸

Although among the list of Alexander historians there is no mention of any Iranians, modern scholars have speculated on the existence of sources informed on Iranian military. Tarn had expanded on the idea of a Greek mercenary soldier in Darius' camp writing a history that is more sympathetic towards the Persians and Memnon the Greek general in Darius' service.¹⁹

Brunt in response to this theory rather postulates on Persian deserters or prisoners supplying Alexander and consequently his historians, Callisthenes and others, with military information.²⁰ This is plausible and seems to be supported by Tabari's history.²¹ It is possible that the same deserters had advised Alexander on some of the cultural matters, while others with access to the Achaemenid records and inscriptions had helped him with the propaganda campaign that intensified following some military victories.

¹³ W. Heckel, "Marsyas of Pella, historian of Macedon", *Hermes* 108, 1980, pp. 444–462; N.G.L. Hammond, "The sources of Justin on Macedonia to the death of Philip", *The Classical Quarterly* 41: (ii), 1991, pp. 496–508.

¹⁴ Heckel & Yardley 2004, pp. xxii f.

¹⁵ J.E. Atkinson, *A Commentary on Q. Curtius Rufus' Historiae Alexandri Maqni*, Amsterdam, 1980, pp. 58 f.; Heckel & Yardley 2004, pp. xxii f.

¹⁶ Heckel & Yardley 2004, p. xxiii.

¹⁷ Plutarch, *Lives*, trans. B. Perrin, London, 1914, Vol. 1, p. ix.

¹⁸ Bosworth, 1988a, pp. 297 f.

¹⁹ W.W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great*, Vol. 2, *Sources and Studies*, Cambridge, 1948, pp. 72–75.

²⁰ P.A. Brunt, "Persian accounts of Alexander's campaigns", *The Classical Quarterly*, n.s. Vol. 12: 1, 1962, pp. 144 f.; cf. P. Briant, *Darius dans l'Ombre d'Alexandre*, Paris, 2003, pp. 214 f.

²¹ See n. 2, above.

Interestingly the vehicle for this process had been in place and previously used by the Achaemenid kings to disseminate the message of their glory among the populace. The minstrels and poets, the vestiges of whose works survive in the Iranian National Epic, the *Shāhnāma* and also accords with the messages related through the Achaemenid sculptural reliefs,²² must have become known to Alexander as well. It is assumed that this medium is the primary provider of the Alexander Histories with the Iranian cultural motifs, having functioned as herald of Alexander's glory and informing the populace of the righteousness of his claim.

Darius I's rhetoric, as recorded in his inscriptions, also play a useful role in Alexander's propaganda and direct borrowings from it are seen to survive in the histories.

While this study does not examine the *Alexander Romances*—especially the Persian branch—it is significant to note that in most versions of that genre Alexander is portrayed as a legitimate Achaemenid hero/king, being related to them by blood.²³ The origin of the *Alexander Romance* is believed to go back to a work by a writer known as the Pseudo-Callisthenes.²⁴ The Persian versions are believed to descend through a Pahlavi translation made during the Sasanian period.²⁵ At the same time bearing in mind that for that period the dominant literary voice had been that of the Zoroastrian clergy whose accounts are hostile to Alexander.²⁶

Perhaps this process reaches to earlier times when the atmosphere had allowed multiple voices. Perhaps the process of Iranization of Alexander²⁷ goes back to his own time and is undertaken with a purpose. In support of this assumption one may cite the possibility of the conflation in

²² P. Jamzadeh, "An Achaemenid epical poem hypothesized", *Studia Iranica* Vol. XX, 1991, pp. 229–232; *Id.*, "An Achaemenid motif seen in later epic and art", *Iranica Antiqua* Vol. XXXV, 2000, pp. 41–56; *Id.*, "Reflections from Persepolis in a Mirror for Princes", *Iranica Antiqua* Vol. XLI, 2006, pp. 71–78; *cf. Id.*, "Royal rhetoric and minstrel poetry: transmission of formulas from Achaemenid court to Medieval European courts", *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute*, Vol. 64, 2001, pp. 18–26; *Id.*, "An Assyrian motif in the *Shāhnāma*", *Iranica Antiqua* Vol. XXXVIII, 2003, pp. 167–172.

²³ M.S. Southgate, *Iskandarnamah, A Persian Medieval Alexander-Romance*, New York, 1978, pp. 9, 169–184.

²⁴ C.A. Robinson, *The History of Alexander the Great*, Vol. I, Providence, 1953, pp. VIII f.

²⁵ T. Noldeke, "Beitrage zur Geschichte des Alexanderromans", *Denkschriften des Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Philosophisch–Historische Klasse, 1890, pp. 11 f.

²⁶ See the chapter XIV on 'Testimony of Zoroastrian Sources'.

²⁷ W.L. Hanaway, *Persian Popular Romances before the Safavid Period*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1970, pp. 90 f.; *Id.*, "Alexander and the question of Iranian identity", *Iranica Varia: Papers in honor of Professor Ehsan Yarshater*, *Acta Iranica* 30, Leiden, 1990, pp. 93 f.

a Zoroastrian source of the accounts of Darius and Alexander, as well as Tabari's mention of a Persian tradition on the length of Alexander's reign, repeating the Zoroastrian source's account.²⁸ Such information would seem to indicate the existence of a Persian source on Alexander, predating the Zoroastrian tradition and moving parallel to the accounts of Darius.

²⁸ See the chapter XIV on 'Testimony of Zoroastrian Sources'.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PLIGHT OF THE ACHAEMENID ROYAL WOMEN

1. *According to Ancestral Custom*

A peculiar feature repeated in practically every history of Alexander, at one time or another, is Darius' declaration of his debt to him. Although Alexander is the aggressor, who in pursuit of kingship over the Achaemenid empire and further east, has defeated him in successive battles, has sacked and burnt his capital, has captured his treasures and has chased him to every corner of his kingdom, yet there are pathetic speeches ascribed to him praising Alexander's magnanimity, generosity, honour and above all declaring him worthy of Achaemenid kingship.¹ All this is only and solely due to Alexander's benevolent and respectful treatment of Darius' close female relatives, captured in battle, when they had accompanied him "according to their ancestral custom".² Darius' elderly mother, his queen-wife, two adult daughters, a young son and 360 or 365 concubines are stated in various histories as having gone to battle, according to ancestral custom of Persians. They are not there as combatants or in any capacity related to combat, as far as the histories tell us, but merely as baggage, a heavy and cumbersome load that is easily captured³ and provides the basis for Darius' pleadings with Alexander for their release, concessions of territories and the hand in marriage of his captured daughters.⁴ Alexander refuses his peace offers, for he aims for the entire empire, and beyond. In the meantime treating Darius' family with utmost respect and even better capability than the king himself. Because of his gentlemanly behaviour he earns Darius' praises and endorsement for kingship.⁵

The relationship fostered with Darius' mother plays an important role in elevating Alexander towards the status of perceived legitimate king of

¹ Arrian IV. 19. 6–20. 3; Justin XI. XV; Plutarch, *Alexander* XXX. 6–7, XLIII. 2; *Id.*, *Fortuna* 338; Curtius IV. X. 34.

² Diodorus XVII. 35. 3; Curtius III. 8. 12.

³ Diodorus XVII. 31. 1 f.; Plutarch *Al.* XXI; Justin XI. IX; Curtius III. 3. 8–25, III. 8. 12 f., III. 9. 5 f., III. 11. 19 f.; Arrian II. 12. 4 f.

⁴ Justin XI. XII; Arrian II. XIV. 1; Plutarch *Al.* XXIX. 4; Diodorus XVII. 54; Curtius IV. 1. 7 f.

⁵ Cf. Briant 2002, 835 f.

Persia. He treats her as he would his own mother and even addresses her as such.⁶ Their feelings are mutual and to the point that even given the chance to escape from captivity, she prefers Alexander's prison to Darius' freedom.⁷ And on hearing of Alexander's death, she too commits suicide and dies.⁸

The carefully developed story of this friendship of course has its own purposes and reasons. As we shall see further on, it aims at feeding on the established prestige and legitimizing powers of queen-mothers, hearkening back to the role played by Atossa in elevating Xerxes to kingship,⁹ and eventually to the tradition of matriarchy that had been prevalent during much of the long history of Elam in Pre-Achaemenid Iran.¹⁰ The primary audience of this particular propaganda effort seems to be the Iranian people, or rather the foremost subject nations of the empire.

Attention to this facet of the Alexander Histories also helps reveal the scope and depth of the appropriate intricate propaganda that obviously would have required the co-operation of those conversant with the languages and informed of the traditions. In the histories one often comes across Alexander's Iranian entourage and courtiers who guide him through the protocols of kingship.¹¹ However, whether Darius' close female relatives were in fact captured at any stage of the siege of the empire is irrelevant. The point of the propaganda is how Alexander would have treated them in order to qualify.¹²

It is also interesting to note that certain information surviving in some of the histories seem to reveal the existence of the same type of propaganda effort in Darius' camp.¹³ This no doubt adds to the value of the histories. Making them a useful resource for the Iranian history as well.¹⁴

⁶ Diodorus XVII. 37, 6; Curtius V. II. 20.

⁷ Curtius IV. XV. 11; Diodorus XVII. 59. 7.

⁸ Diodorus XVII. 118. 3; Curtius X. 5. 19–25; Justin XIII. 1.

⁹ Herodotus VII. 5; cf. H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, "Exit Atossa: Images of women in Greek historiography on Persia", *Images of Women in Antiquity* eds. A. Cameron & A. Kuhrt, Detroit, 1983, 20–33; E.D. Carney, "Alexander and Persian Women", *American Journal of Philology* 117, 1996, 563–583 for a different view on the evidence.

¹⁰ W. Hinz, *The Lost World of Elam*, New York, 1973, 42 f., 110 f.; I.M. Diakonoff, "Elam", *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 2, *The Median and Achaemenian Periods*, ed. I. Gershevitch, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 13, 16 f.

¹¹ Diodorus XVII. 77. 4 f.; Curtius VI. 6. 1–11; Justin XII. 3. 8–12; Plutarch, *Alexander* 45, 47.

¹² Cf. Arrian II. 12. 8.

¹³ Briant, 2002, p. 771.

¹⁴ See further the following chapters below.

As stated, a phrase that occurs in some of the histories is that the Persians took their women folk to combat, according to ancestral custom.¹⁵ It is possible to examine this comment in its contexts in Diodorus and Curtius and establish the difficulty with accepting it at face value. According to Diodorus,¹⁶ after the death of Memnon Darius' general—a Rhodian¹⁷—there was argument over the necessity or even logic of Darius' own participation in the battle for saving the empire from Alexander's aggression. In this process another Greek adviser, Charidemus the Athenian commander¹⁸ also loses his life, but for speaking his mind and making slurs on Persians' lack of manliness.¹⁹ Finally, not finding any worthy replacements for Memnon, Darius himself decides to face Alexander in combat. He collects his forces in Babylon and from among his friends and relatives selects those suitable, giving some commands according to their abilities and ordering others to fight at his side as his personal staff.²⁰ With over 400,000 infantry and 100,000 cavalry, he marches out of Babylon and in the direction of Cilicia.²¹

At this juncture Diodorus suddenly informs us that: "he had with him his wife and children—a son and two daughters—and his mother".²² This development may be seen as an odd twist in the momentum of the battle strategy of a king who a short while ago was not even certain of his own participation in the impending combat. However, his soldiers for no reason

¹⁵ Diodorus XVII. 35. 3; Curtius III. 8. 12; Diodorus II. 34. 3, on the authority of Ctesias says that the Sacae women are courageous and share the dangers of war with their husbands; cf. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* IV. II. 2: "But as the Hyrcanians were to march in the very rear, they had their wagons also and their families in the rear. For, as we know, most of Asiatic peoples take the field accompanied by their entire households", which may perhaps be seen as a general reflection on the Asiatics' lack of judgement, the consequence of which is foregrounded in III. III. 67: "And the women of the Assyrians and their allies, seeing the men in flight even inside the camp, raised a cry and ran panic-stricken, both those who had children and the younger women as well, while they rent their garments, tore their cheeks, and begged all whom they met not to run away and leave them but to defend both them and their children and themselves as well." See also W. Heckel, *The Conquests of Alexander the Great*, Cambridge, 2008, pp. 64–65, nos. 39–40, who takes the presence of Darius' family in battlefield as fact, drawing parallels with the later practices seen in the American Civil War and the Crimean War, during which some battles had served as entertainment for the rich, as well, although viewed from a safe distance however.

¹⁶ Diodorus XVII. 30. 1 f.

¹⁷ Diodorus XVII. 18. 2.

¹⁸ Diodorus XVII. 30. 2.

¹⁹ Diodorus XVII. 30. 4.

²⁰ Diodorus XVII. 31. 1.

²¹ Diodorus XVII. 31. 2; cf. Briant, 2002 790 f.

²² Diodorus XVII. 31. 2, and the narrative shifts to Alexander musing over Memnon's tactics, etc.

at all—so far—are also joined by a group of old and young women and a child. This is a totally out of place information that is neither related to the forthcoming battle, nor to any other reason. But it has its own logic and serves a purpose in the overall scheme of the history. I believe it is inserted in so to provide the background for the drama that is about to unfold.

Shortly after setting out from Babylon, in order to meet Parmenion, Alexander's general, in battle, Darius decides to make his army mobile and diverts his baggage train and the non-combatants to Damascus in Syria.²³ As it turns out, he has to meet Alexander himself and the description of the battle of Issus follows which ends in Darius' flight and the capture of his treasures, his family, his entire harem, as well as those of the entire Achaemenid nobility who "had accompanied the army according to an ancestral custom of the Persians".²⁴

It seems that certain problems occur here. In the first place if he has to make his army mobile and send the women folk and the baggage to safety, why to Damascus rather than inner Persia or Media if Babylon is already considered at risk? Bearing in mind that in following Diodorus' account all that one ascertains is that he has just left Babylon and is moving towards Cilicia. But, on the other hand, we are told that this burdensome out of place group has to be there, for it is their custom. At the same time, however, it is realized that they do not belong on the battlefield and need to be sent away to safety, as if this was the very first time that Persians are going to war and in practice find out that their customs are defunct. In fact Curtius, as we shall see, has Darius exclaim exactly such understanding.²⁵ This very custom is responsible for the tragic scenes that follow, the plunder of the vast treasures carried to battle:

much silver, no little gold and vast numbers of rich dresses from the royal treasure, which they took, and likewise a great store of wealth belonging to the king's friends, relatives, and military commanders. Not only the ladies of the royal house but also those of the king's relatives and friends, born on gilded chariots, had accompanied the army according to an ancestral custom of the Persians, and each of them had brought with her a store of rich furniture and feminine adornment in keeping with their vast wealth and luxury.²⁶

One may add such as brides going to grooms and taking their dowry with them.

²³ Diodorus XVII. 32. 2.

²⁴ Diodorus XVII. 35. 3.

²⁵ Curtius V. 1. 6.

²⁶ Diodorus XVII. 35. 2–4.

Diodorus describes their lot after their capture as extremely pathetic and states that those who so far had been accustomed to traveling in luxurious carriages and exposing no part of their bodies now had burst out of the tents wearing only a chiton and rending their garments. They called on the gods and fell at the knees of the conquerors. Some had their clothes torn, beaten and torn by their hair. "Thus outraging the dearest and proudest of the Persian possessions by virtues of Fortune's generosity to them."²⁷ In the same account we are told that "they who previously from daintiness only with reluctance had been conveyed in luxurious carriages and had exposed no part of their bodies unveiled"²⁸ are subjected to this tragic outcome. Again we have contradictions in the same source. If these women are supposed to accompany their men to battle, then why are they so pampered and protected? It is interesting to see that according to certain other sources it is only Darius and no other previous king who takes his harem to war.²⁹ This account is based on the authority of Dicaearchus of Messene, a writer in the fourth and third centuries BC.³⁰

Philip of Macedon did not, to be sure, take women along with him on his campaigns as did Darius, the one who was deposed by Alexander; for Darius, although engaged in a war in which his entire empire was at stake, took round with him three-hundred-sixty concubines, according to the account given by Dicaearchus in the third book of his *History of Greece*. Yet Philip always married a new wife with each new war he undertook.³¹

It is beyond the scope of the present work to determine if it is possible to see the solution to the problem in this very passage and understand that Dicaearchus' account forms the basis of what in the *Alexander Histories* has the qualifying phrase of "according to ancestral custom of the Persians" also attached to it. It is probable that Dicaearchus—a contemporary of Alexander—had participated in the development of his propaganda. It is noteworthy that this report is careful in distinguishing which Darius and therefore not implicating any other former ruler. It clearly aims at that Darius who countered Alexander.

At the same time it is interesting to note that the surviving histories prior to the *Alexander Histories* do not reveal the knowledge of any such custom. While in fact through other Classical sources we learn that

²⁷ Diodorus XVII. 35. 5 f.

²⁸ Diodorus XVII. 35. 5.

²⁹ Athenaeus XIII. 557 b; Livy IX. 17. 16.

³⁰ M. Hadas, *A History of Greek Literature*, New York, 1950, 158; A. Lesky, *A History of Greek Literature*, New York, 1966, 578.

³¹ Athenaeus XIII. 557 b.

customarily the royal women were most jealously protected and guarded and it was a crime punishable by death for any man to dare touch them.³² With such strict traditions and laws in place it is very difficult to see an Achaemenid king taking his women folk to combat and not only endangering their lives and honour but also subjecting his own men to the additional risk of inadvertently crossing the line and insulting the king.

Furthermore, if one goes through the former accounts of Persian armies, no such information regarding the presence of the royal women is seen. The other famous army of the Persians, also of interest to the Greek historians, was that of Xerxes on his march against Greece. The full description of that army according to Herodotus, is given in his *Histories*.³³ This army is so massive that a tale is recorded about it, according to which a man cries out to Zeus for having the whole world march against them.³⁴ Yet no similar information to that seen in *Alexander Histories*, as to the presence of royal women, is encountered. In fact what one learns is that the Persians did not think a woman belonged at battlefield. Even Artabanus, the king's uncle who doubts the merits of Xerxes' campaign against Greece, is compared to a woman and told by the king to stay behind: "I lay upon you this disgrace, that you shall not go with me and my army against Hellas, but abide here with the women."³⁵ In another instance an old man who has his five sons taken to war asks the king for the favour of having one of his sons released so to stay behind and be of help to his old father.³⁶ As a mark of degradation and dishonor, the king tells him that he should even take his wife to combat:

villain you see me myself marching against Hellas, and taking with me my sons and brothers and kinsfolk and friends; and do you, my slave—who should have followed me with all your household and your very wife—speak to me of your son?³⁷

In Xerxes' army there is only one woman naval commander, the highly unusual case of Artemisia who replaces her dead husband and causes Herodotus to state: "moves me to marvel greatly that a woman should have gone with the armament against Hellas."³⁸

³² Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 27. 1; *Id.*, *Themistocles* 26. 5.

³³ Herodotus VII. 55–100.

³⁴ Herodotus VII. 56.

³⁵ *Id.*, VII. 11.

³⁶ *Id.*, VII. 38.

³⁷ *Id.*, VII. 39.

³⁸ *Id.*, VII. 99.

However, a certain category of women did follow the Persian army of Xerxes: the common concubines who were placed alongside the cooks and servants.³⁹ Herodotus imparts this information in passing, while stressing the Persian army's cumbersome size.⁴⁰

The information on Darius should also be seen in the same light. But what specifically had been catered to the attention of the Iranian audience in the *Alexander Histories* was the inclusion of Darius' mother, his wife and daughters. He is to be portrayed as so inept and dishonourable as to even take his most honoured female folks to combat, like some lowly concubine. This understanding would be similar to the retributions of the old man by Xerxes who was told that as a dishonourable man he should even bring his wife to combat.⁴¹ By this insulting comparison of the old man's wife to a concubine, the king is shaming him as a punishment.

In this connection it is interesting to note that, according to the Classical sources, Persian men had different categories of wives, noble highly placed ones and concubines.⁴² The former category was so protected that even their husbands' drinking parties was not considered a suitable place for them, having to leave after dinner so to be replaced by the concubines.⁴³ However, all the women were strictly guarded against strangers and no man was to see them or touch them on journeys or elsewhere.⁴⁴ Furthermore, although at the time of Darius the luxuries of the Achaemenid court, after nearly three centuries of rule, seems to have reached a staggering point, described by Greek writers in superlative terms, such as the king's 360 wives who sleep during the day in order to entertain him at night,⁴⁵ yet it is difficult to see them confusing the circumstances of warfare with the controlled environments of a royal hunt, for instance.⁴⁶ Were they taking the entire court out on an excursion with the army in order to witness the humiliation of the upstart Macedonian? But the way in which the same sources narrate the story that sense is not imparted. On the one hand, Darius is summoning his military might

³⁹ *Id.*, VII. 83, 187.

⁴⁰ *Id.*, VII. 186.

⁴¹ *Id.*, VII. 39.

⁴² Plutarch, *Moralia* 140 B, 613 a.

⁴³ *Id.*, 140 b.

⁴⁴ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 27; Themistocles 26. 5.

⁴⁵ Athenaeus XII. 514 on the authority of Heracleides of Cumae in his *Persian History*; cf. Briant 2002, 299.

⁴⁶ Briant 2002, 297 f.; cf. Curtius VIII. IX. 28 for the description of the Indian king's custom to take his concubines to hunt so to pray and sing for his success.

to meet the challenge, while, on the other hand, he is handicapped by the cumbersome baggage that has to be there according to custom. Still halfway through he decides to lighten his load and send them to safety. It just does not figure out.

However, this build up of misplaced information resembles another literary effort also created to stress the Persians' degeneracy and love of luxury. Chapter 8 of Book 8 of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* is believed to be a later addition to the original text and aims to discredit the Persians and hence the Medic influence in Athens.⁴⁷ In the *Alexander Histories* we also seem to be encountering a similar type of effort with the purpose of influencing loyalties.

If, however, Darius had been raised as a cloistered pampered prince, addicted to the various luxuries of the court, and contrary to the Persian tradition with its emphasis on the harsh military training from an early age until old age,⁴⁸ one could have given some credibility to the reports on his excesses, cowardice and degeneracy. But the fact is that the same *Alexander Histories* inform us of Darius' outstanding courage while serving in the army of Artaxerxes III.⁴⁹ It is precisely because of this noteworthy record that he succeeds to kingship. According to Diodorus: "Darius' selection for the throne was based on his known bravery, in which quality he far surpassed the other Persians."⁵⁰ He proceeds to give the story of his hand to hand combat with a Cadusian fighter who had challenged a volunteer among the Persians. Where no one else dared, Darius had stepped in and slew the man, gaining first place in prowess among Persians and considered worthy of kingship.⁵¹ Justin also relates the story of the combat with the Cadusian fighter and concludes: "On the death of Ochus,

⁴⁷ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, trans. W. Miller, London, 1914, Vol. 2, 438 f.; While in previous chapters of the same book Xenophon informs of Cyrus the Younger's regimented army in II. IV. 2f.; V. III. 34–45 where a general 'baggage and camp followers' is mentioned; VI. II. 25–41; VI. III. 30; VII. I. 22, a general 'women's carriages' mentioned; Cf. Xenophon, *Anabasis* I. VIII. 8–12 on Artaxerxes' army with no mention of women; Cf. John W.I. Lee, *A Greek Army on the March*, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 271–275; Cf. Strabo 15. 1. 55–56 on the Indian king's Bacchic hunt in which he is accompanied by armed women, who on the one hand also go on military expeditions with the men, while on the other hand they are separated from the men and any man who passes their fenced off area faces the death penalty. He adds a note of skepticism characterizing the customs as 'novel'; cf. Aeschylus, *The Persians* 55, 130–135 for specific mention of women staying at home while the men are at war.

⁴⁸ DNB, 8 in R.G. Kent, *Old Persian, Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*, New York, 1953, 140; Herodotus I. 136; Strabo XV. 3. 18–19; Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 24. 6; Briant 2002, 210 f.

⁴⁹ Diodorus XVII. 6. 1 f. Justin X. 3. 4; Briant 2002, 771.

⁵⁰ Diodorus XVII. 6. 1.

⁵¹ *Id.*, XVII. 6. 1.

he was chosen king by the people from regard to his former merits, and, that nothing might be wanting to his royal dignity, honoured with the name of Darius.⁵² Briant rightly identifies this story as emanating from Darius' camp in response to the Alexander propaganda that had aimed at questioning Darius' legitimacy.⁵³ In fact, this would seem to provide a response to the type of stories recorded by Dicaearchus that even during the war with Alexander when his entire empire was at stake he could not do without the pleasures of the harem and took his entire 360 concubines around with him.⁵⁴

With regard to the question of the presence of the royal women in combat, one may note that some Alexander Histories inform us of the prudence of certain of Darius' subjects to send their women and children away from the scene of imminent combat,⁵⁵ while still others prefer to commit mass suicide rather than suffer the shame of having their women dishonoured by the victors.⁵⁶ Yet the Persians have to take their entire belongings and women folk to combat and like idiots wait for the enemy to come and take all. In fact, Livy relates the exact same understanding:

He (*i.e.* Alexander) would have said it was no Darius with whom he had to deal, trailing women and eunuchs after him, and weighed down with the gold and purple trappings of his station. Him he found a booty rather than an enemy, and conquered without bloodshed, merely by daring to despise vain shows.⁵⁷

This line of argument would have us believe that Persians with their king at the time had no sense of warfare or any experience of the battlefield.

In following Curtius' account, as a matter of fact, it becomes clear that it is primarily a question of the comparison of the armies in the first place and then the personal merits, or lack thereof, of the two leaders. What he strives to show is the strategic make up of the two opposing camps. Where one is restricted with tradition and bogged down by its heavy size, the other is effective, efficient and blessed with the genius of its leader.

After giving a detailed account of the Persian king's army, heavily underlining its luxury, the presence of the king's mother, wife, daughters,

⁵² Justin X. 3. 4.

⁵³ Briant, 2002, 770 f.

⁵⁴ Athenaeus XIII. 557.

⁵⁵ Arrian I. 2, 2-3, 4; Diodorus XVII. 41. 1; Curtius IV. 3. 20; Justin XI. X. 14; *cf.* Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* III. I. 2 f. & below.

⁵⁶ Curtius IX. IV. 6.

⁵⁷ Livy IX. XVII. 16.

household staff, children and their governors, eunuchs, 365 concubines, all regally dressed and adorned, king's money on 600 mules and 300 camels, wives of his relatives and friends, as well as his fighting men: the 10,000 and the 15,000 all adorned with barbaric wealth, still other fighters of the same quality,⁵⁸ he shifts his attention to the Macedonian army and states:

[I]f on the other hand anyone should look upon the Macedonian army, its appearance was different; men and horses gleaming, not with gold and particoloured garments, but with steel and bronze. An army prepared to stand or to follow, not over weighted with excessive numbers or with baggage, watchful, not only for the signal, but even for the nod of its leader.⁵⁹

Next that we hear of the women in Curtius' account is when we learn that the king sends his money and his most valuable possessions to Damascus in Syria. His wife and mother, however, still follow the army according to the custom of his nation, as well as his unmarried daughters and his little son who accompany their father.⁶⁰ During actual combat the women are placed in the center.⁶¹

With their defeat and flight of the fighting men, the king's camp is captured, with huge amounts of gold and silver, the equipment not of war but of luxury, as well as the women who are then abused by the captors.⁶²

With regard to the flight of the Persians, it is interesting that Curtius even informs us of the direction of their escape: "The barbarians had fled in widely differing directions: some where the direct road led to Persia, others made, by round about ways, for the rocks and hidden defiles of the mountains, a few for the camp of Darius",⁶³ as if implying Darius' earlier loss of location and direction? Not knowing his whereabouts in his own kingdom? And the road to the safety of Persia, along which to send the women and the treasures, although his close female relatives are still in his camp and have been captured. Later, after they are transferred to Alexander's camp and now treated with utmost respect and dignity, Darius requests their release through envoys and letters. It is interesting to see that, according to Curtius,⁶⁴ Parmenion, Alexander's general, advises him

⁵⁸ Curtius III. 3. 8–25.

⁵⁹ Curtius III. 3. 26–27.

⁶⁰ *Id.*, III. 8. 12.

⁶¹ Curtius III. IX. 5.

⁶² Curtius 3. 11. 19–22.

⁶³ Curtius 3. 11. 19.

⁶⁴ Curtius 4. 11. 12.

to exchange one old woman and two girls, a hindrance to their journeys and their marches, for 30,000 talents of gold offered by Darius.

In the meantime, Darius' wife has died of travel fatigue,⁶⁵ the accounts of which will follow later.

In another section, Darius, in a speech to his army before the battle of Arbela, concedes to the mistake of taking women and children to war.⁶⁶ Even further on, after the defeat of Arbela, in yet another speech he sees Alexander's destruction to be eminent, for Darius himself had learned from experience that costly equipment and concubines and trains of eunuchs were only burdens and hindrances. Alexander, dragging these same clogs behind him, would be inferior in the resources by which he had formerly conquered.⁶⁷ Therefore, one may ask if this was the ancient custom of the Persians, or only then put to practice and proved wrong?

But what is the origin of this information, despite the difficulties in placing it where the historians locate it in their narratives? It would be useful to expand on Curtius' account of the Persian procession before encountering Alexander at Issus. He says that it was a Persian tradition not to begin a march until after sunrise, and the day was already well advanced when the signal was given by trumpet from the king's tent. Above the tent, visible to all, was a representation of the sun in a crystal case. The order of the march was in front on silver altars bearing the fire which the Persians called sacred and eternal. Next came the Magi, chanting their traditional hymn, followed by 365 young men in purple robes, their number equaling the days of the year. Then came the chariot consecrated to Jupiter, drawn by white horses, followed by a horse of extraordinary size, which the Persians called 'the sun's horse'. Its drivers wore white robes and carried golden whips. At a short distance were ten carts decorated with relief carvings in gold and silver, followed by the cavalry of twelve nations with varying arms and customs. Next came the 'Immortals' some 10,000 in number. These were adorned with barbaric opulence: golden necklaces, garments adorned with cloth of gold and long-sleeved tunics studded with jewels. At a short distance came the 15,000 they call 'the king's kinsmen', who were dressed almost like women. Those who followed were the Spear-bearers who took care of the royal robes, and they preceded the king's chariot, in which he rode towering above them all. Both sides of the chariots were embossed with gold and silver images of the gods; the yoke

⁶⁵ Curtius 4. 10. 18.

⁶⁶ Curtius 4. 14. 11.

⁶⁷ Curtius 5. 1. 6.

was studded with sparkling gems and on it rose two golden images a cubit high of Ninus and Belus. Between these was a golden eagle with wings spread outward. The sumptuous attire of the king was especially noteworthy. His tunic was purple, interwoven with white at the centre, his cloak with gold embroidery of hawks attacking each other with their beaks. From his gilded belt which he wore like women was slung his scimitar, its scabbard made of a single gem. His royal head-dress, called a 'Cidaris' by the Persians, was encircled by a blue ribbon flecked with white. Ten-thousand spearmen carrying lances chased with silver and tipped with gold followed the king's chariot, and to the right and left he was attended by some 200 of his most noble relatives. At the end of this column came 30,000 foot-soldiers followed by 400 of the king's horses. Next, at a distance of 1 stade, came Sisigambis, Darius' mother, in a carriage, accompanied by his wife in another carriage. A troop of women attended the queens on horseback. Then came the fifteen so-called 'Armamaxae' in which rode the king's children, their nurses and a herd of eunuchs, who are not at all held in contempt by these peoples. Next came the carriages of the 360 royal concubines, also dressed in royal finery, followed by 600 mules and 300 camels carrying the king's money, with a guard of archers in attendance. After this column rode the wives of the king's relatives and friends and hordes of camp-followers and servants. At the end, to close up the rear, were the light-armed troops with their respective leaders.⁶⁸

It is noteworthy that Curtius gives the number of nations participating in the campaign, with their varying arms and customs, as twelve, without elaborating on their ethnicity. Arrian names some twenty-three nations forming Darius' army at Gaugamela.⁶⁹ And elsewhere he refers to a written document of the Persians on the arrangement of the army, captured by Alexander's forces.⁷⁰

Certainly the number '12' Curtius quotes is an understatement if taken literally. However, it is possible to see it as representing a totality, in line with concepts such as the twelve signs of the zodiac or twelve months of the year.

The significance of the number '365', for the young men in purple, is specifically stated as corresponding to the number of days in a year. Their function is not clarified, and one cannot ascertain if they were meant to

⁶⁸ Curtius III. 3. 8–25.

⁶⁹ Arrian III. 8. 3–7.

⁷⁰ *Id.*, III. XI. 3.

be seen as forming a part of the Magi's ritual group or were fighting men placed behind the Magi and before the symbolic white horses and the chariot of Jupiter and the horse of the sun.

Further on the number '365' is also repeated for the king's concubines.⁷¹

As noted before, the purpose of the enumeration of this outlandish display of opulence and out of place luxury is to place it in contradiction to Alexander's lean and efficient fighting force. Here what we have as a representation of Darius' army may in fact originate from a roster of various categories of the king's attendants, his family members, his clergy and their staff, as well as the army, yet some in round calendrical numbers. As if someone had praised the Achaemenid king's wealth and good fortune in laudatory terms and in the context of singing of the king's glory, perhaps in relation to a certain religious festival. But for the Alexander historian this information would seem to be a useful tool to place it contra his king's superior qualities. This collection of material seems out of place and employed towards a specific end.

There are many difficulties with accepting this report as pertaining to an actual combat line-up.⁷² Some parts of it, in fact, read like representations in art form, with details of textile and colour, while other sections seem to rely on a compilation of a roster or a census of various categories of courtiers. It is meant to sound authentic, but it is probably a misplaced body of information that creates a foil for the build-up towards the comprehension of the superiority of Alexander's army.

⁷¹ Curtius III. 3. 24.

⁷² Cf. Briant, 2002, pp. 187 f. who sees a nomadic court on the move, even to war, down to the last household person, courtier or relative of the king; cf. E. Badian, "Conspiracies", eds. A.B. Bosworth & E.J. Baynham, *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction*, Oxford, 2002, pp. 50–95, n. 60, who questions the authenticity of "in accordance with an ancestral custom of the Persians", but nevertheless justifies the veracity of the presence of the royal women in campaign; J.E. Atkinson, *A Commentary on Q. Curtius Rufus' Historiae Alexandri Magni*, BKS 3 & 4, Amsterdam, 1980, p. 195, who also doubts the historicity of the custom, but notes that according to Herodotus III. 31, Cambyse's wife had gone with him to Egypt. However, it is noteworthy that Herodotus in relating accounts of Cambyse's madness (III. 30 f.)—one of which is marrying his sisters, against Persian law—adds that "it was the younger of these who had come with him to Egypt, and whom he now killed" (trans. A.D. Godley, Vol. II, 1920, London, p. 43). It is not clear if she had been with the campaign from the outset, or had joined him later. At the same time Strabo (XVII. 1. 5) reports that Cambyse's sister—or wife—had died in Egypt and that Cambyse had named the place after her: Meroe (trans. H.L. Jones, 1917, London, Vol. 8, p. 19). Again it is not clear when she had gone to Egypt, although in Strabo's report her death does not seem to be due to the king's will.

It is interesting that the Magi are not enumerated, and yet certain other categories come in round numbers with probable calendrical significances. Moreover, the king's mother and wife are specifically stated and further on their fate in Alexander's camp is described.

2. *Alexander and Darius' Mother*

The capture of the Achaemenid royal women by Alexander's forces is related in different terms, or rather pitches, by the historians. Arrian concisely relates the entire matter of their presence in battlefield and their capture, in reverse order, the important point obviously being their capture by Alexander which provides the opportunity for his show of mercy. He states that Darius' camp was stormed and captured, his mother was taken with his wife who was also his sister and his infant son, as well as two of Darius' daughters and a few noble Persian ladies who were in their attendance. The other Persians had sent their gear and womenfolk to Damascus, and Darius too had sent there most of his treasure and the various paraphernalia which the luxurious life of a great king seems to require, even on campaign.⁷³ With regard to the last sentence, the obvious question is if his luxurious life style even in war had required the presence of such luxuries, then why is he sending them away? How is he going to manage with this necessary baggage that he has to carry along in every situation?

Curtius' account on the plight of the captured women is dramatic, resembling the narratives of a passion play. He relates that Darius' mother and his wife who were captives now had attracted everyone's gaze and attention. His mother commanded respect by her age and her royal dignity and his wife by a beauty that was not marred even by her present lot. She had taken into her arms a son, who had not yet passed his sixth year, a boy born into the expectation of the great fortune his father had just lost. In the lap of their aged grandmother lay her two grown-up granddaughters who were grieving for themselves and their grandmother. Around

⁷³ Arrian II. XI. 9–10, while further on in III. XIX. 2, he states that Darius from Media (after Alexander's sacking of Persepolis) sent the women and all the belongings with him in closed wagons to the Caspian gates. Darius himself was preparing for another battle. Is this a more probable version of the events with regard to the timing and manner of the women's transport in "closed wagons"?; cf. A.B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire, the Reign of Alexander the Great*, Cambridge, 1988a, pp. 63, 94; *Shāhnāma* has them captured after the third battle, see ed. J. Mohl, p. 1397.

her stood a large number of noble ladies with torn hair and garments rent, forgetful of their former dignity. They called upon their 'queens' and 'mistresses' with titles that were formerly appropriate but no longer applicable. They forgot their own plight and kept asking on which wing Darius had stood and how the battle had gone, claiming that they were not captives if the king still lived.⁷⁴

It is significant that in Curtius' account Darius' son is six years old, while Arrian stated that he was an infant. Furthermore, the last sentence is also difficult to understand. Unless it is meant to foreshadow the forthcoming negotiations for their release or to indicate hope for the future as long as the king lived.

However, a short while later the false report of Darius' death reaches their ears, shattering their hope. The sound of their wailing reaches Alexander who sends a messenger and informs them that Darius is still alive. Amid considerable added drama and confusion among the women, this is finally achieved,⁷⁵ and they are assured of their own personal safety and status as queens.⁷⁶

The momentum is gradually building up towards the central focus of the story, the meeting of Alexander with the queen-mother Sisigambis and the setting for the development of the relationship based on mutual respect. Next day Alexander pays the women a visit, taking his closest friend Hephaestion with him. Since Hephaestion is taller, the queen first mistakes him for Alexander and does him obeisance. Soon she is put right and now falls at Alexander's feet. Alexander, taking her hand and raising her to her feet, calls her 'mother' and states that Hephaestion is also Alexander.⁷⁷ In the course of the meeting Alexander orders that all their ornaments to be returned to them and that they should lack nothing of their former fortune.⁷⁸ This act leads to the queen-mother's laudations of Alexander already having him replace Darius in her eyes:

O king, you deserve that we should offer for you the same prayers which we formerly offered for our own Darius and you do not merit our hatred, since

⁷⁴ Curtius III. XI. 24–26.

⁷⁵ *Id.*, III. XII. 1–12.

⁷⁶ *Id.*, III. XII. 12.

⁷⁷ *Id.*, III. XII. 13–17; Arrian II. 12. 8, doubts the veracity of this visit. E.I. Robson, the translator, notes the significance of this remark as: "Presumably Alexander referred to the etymology of his name: a 'driver-away of men', or possibly, what would best suit the context, a 'protector of mankind'. Hephaestion was his *alter ego*", Vol. 1, 171, n. 1; Diodorus XVII. 37. 6.

⁷⁸ Curtius III. XII. 23; Diodorus XVII. 38. 1 f.; Justin XI. IX.

you have surpassed so great a king, not in good fortune alone, but also in justice. You indeed call me mother and queen, but I confess that I am your handmaid. I both rise to the greatness of my past rank and I can bear the yoke of my present lot. It is important for you that you should wish that the extent of your power over us should be attested by clemency rather than cruelty.⁷⁹

Thereafter, holding Darius' son in his arms, he is touched by the boy's fearless expression, and wishes the same courage for the boy's father. He then leaves the tent.⁸⁰

Darius' daughters whom he has regarded as his own sisters are also present. As for Darius' wife, the most beautiful woman of her time, Alexander's gentlemanly code of conduct does not allow him, nor anyone else, near her.⁸¹

In this meeting, the merging of the two identities of Darius and Alexander, on the one hand, and that of Alexander and Hephaestion, on the other hand, is noteworthy. It is tempting to see a sly hand placing two layers of two versions of the same story together. The presence of Hephaestion in this meeting is not necessary. It is unclear why he accompanies Alexander there, which only serves to create confusion and have Sisigambis do obeisance twice.

The crucial point of the meeting, however, is her honouring Alexander as Darius' heir—who himself is still alive while his son and heir is also present in the scene. Alexander is now to receive her prayers instead of Darius.⁸² This is all of course measured propaganda for an Iranian public's attention, who must understand the political ramifications of this endorsement in the contextual background of the significance of the role of the queens and queen-mothers during the Achaemenid period⁸³ and even more so during the Elamite period with its inevitable heritage affecting the latter cultures and dynasties. In this connection, Arrian's report that she interceded for the Uxii is noteworthy.⁸⁴ In Curtius' account, the story is elaborated and mainly concerns her relatives in the Uxii revolt.⁸⁵ In contrast, in Arrian's report she simply takes up the Uxii's side, as if Arrian were aiming for the crux of the story which is her connection with the Uxii.

⁷⁹ Curtius III. XII. 23–25.

⁸⁰ *Id.*, III. XII. 26.

⁸¹ *Id.*, III. XII. 21–22.

⁸² *Id.*, III. XII. 24.

⁸³ Attosa in Herodotus. VII. 5; Parysatis in Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 2.

⁸⁴ Arrian III. 17. 6.

⁸⁵ Curtius V. III. 12 f.

Therefore, in the face of this total acceptance of the foreign conqueror—according to the account—can one perhaps see a stressed and underlined sneer at Alexander's relationship with Hephaestion?

As if a later version was to pass judgement and try to annul the earlier version—which would have had only Alexander meeting the women and receiving the queen's obeisance and prayers and laudations—by including Hephaestion in as well, so to say for instance: 'no, Alexander cannot be another Darius for he is already another Hephaestion', especially in light of the attack on Darius' manliness and courage by Alexander in the course of petting his son?

Interestingly enough a version exists that has only Alexander—with some unnamed attendants—meeting the women.⁸⁶ But it is difficult to say if this is the earlier hypothetical version of Curtius' account or more likely a different one. For where Curtius has Darius' mother doing obeisance to Hephaestion, by mistake, Justin has the frightened women falling in each other's arms and later doing obeisance to Alexander and begging him to allow them enough time to bury Darius. Alexander informs them that Darius is still alive. In Curtius' report, it is Leonnatus who gives this news, before Alexander's meeting, and assures them of their safety.⁸⁷

If the hypothesis about Curtius' account is true, the latter imposed version would have emanated from the Iranian camp as a response to the propaganda effects of the version describing this meeting. In this regard, one may note Curtius' apologetic tone in introducing Hephaestion:

He was by far the dearest to the king of all his friends; brought up with him, and the confidant of all his secrets, he also had more freedom than anyone else in admonishing him, a privilege which he nevertheless used in such a manner that it seemed rather to be allowed by the king than claimed by himself.⁸⁸

Arrian doubts that such a meeting took place⁸⁹ and relates the version that he had found in Ptolemy and Aristobulus which has Leonnatus visit the women.⁹⁰ According to Arrian, Leonnatus assures the women that they were to keep all their former privileges, for he had not fought Darius

⁸⁶ Justin XI. IX.

⁸⁷ Curtius III. XII. 12.

⁸⁸ *Id.*, III. XII. 16.

⁸⁹ Arrian II. 12. 8.

⁹⁰ Arrian II. 12. 3–7; *cf.* Curtius III. XII. 11–12; Diodorus XVII. 37. 4, where this visit precedes that of Alexander.

with any personal enmity but had made legitimate war for the sovereignty of Asia.⁹¹

One can see that, even though the meeting between Alexander and the queen mother does not take place according to the version reported by Arrian,⁹² yet its significance is stressed: gaining legitimacy for kingship. As knowledge about the version that includes the meeting, Arrian goes on to say:

There is, however, a story that Alexander himself next day visited the tent with Hephaestion alone of his suite; and Darius' mother, mistaking the king—for both were accoutered alike—approached Hephaestion and prostrated herself before him, for he appeared the taller. Hephaestion, however withdrew, and one of the queen-mother's attendants pointing to Alexander said that he was the king; whereupon she also withdrew in confusion at her mistake; Alexander remarking that she had made no error, for Hephaestion was also an Alexander. This I have included not as necessarily true nor yet altogether untrustworthy. If it so happened, I have nothing but praise for Alexander for his compassion towards these women, and for his thus trusting and honouring his comrade; if it is the sort of thing that the historians thought Alexander would have said and done, and hence they accept it, I still have nothing but praise for Alexander.⁹³

Perhaps one can note an apologetic tone in dealing with this story and the need to pass a positive judgement on its final effect.

Arrian does not report the rest of the meeting and the exchanges between Alexander and the queen-mother, but finds it necessary to praise Alexander's show of friendship towards Hephaestion, also calling him Alexander. If this is to be understood as a play on the meaning of the name 'protector of men', then it can be seen as a kingly attribute.⁹⁴ They both are kings, while the real king is still alive and trying to muster his forces.⁹⁵

It is possible that Arrian's preferred version, that of Ptolemy and Aristobulus, is a lateral one, responding to the story recorded by Curtius, that already seems twice removed, relating two superimposed versions:

⁹¹ Arrian II. 12. 5.

⁹² *Ibid.*; Plutarch, *Alexander* XXI. 1 f.

⁹³ Arrian II. 12. 6–8.

⁹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, translator's note; According to Diodorus XVII. 114. 4–5, on Hephaestion's death fires were extinguished as for an Achaemenid king. People thought that the order was an ill omen and that heaven was foretelling the king's own death. See further below on Hephaestion's death.

⁹⁵ Cf. Curtius IV. XVI. 15 on old men and women of a village, after the defeat, slaughter and general millie of the battle of Arbela still calling on Darius as their king is noteworthy, as if demanding king's protection.

one that has only Alexander visiting the women, and a later version which has Hephaestion accompanying him as well, while the crucial point in all this is the assertion of Alexander's legitimacy for kingship.

As to other Alexander historians, as mentioned, Plutarch's account⁹⁶ resembles that of Arrian, while Diodorus' report is similar in some aspects to that of Curtius. He also has Hephaestion present, and a somewhat more dramatic queen-mother.⁹⁷

In Diodorus's version, prior to Alexander's visit and on hearing of his clemency "the captive women hailed Alexander as a god and ceased from their wailing".⁹⁸ Next day the visit takes place. The account of the mistaken identity with Hephaestion is given, while the appellation 'mother' is explained as by thus addressing the aged woman he was in fact giving her the promise of the coming benefactions and assuring her that she would be his second mother. Following these assurances, he restores her royal jewelry and her previous status, with honours.⁹⁹

The meeting proceeds with the episode of Darius' son and Alexander's remark on Darius' lack of courage. Although in Diodorus' account her speech is lacking, yet her behaviour is even more emotional. Seeing Alexander's clemency, the women break into uncontrolled weeping, out of joy. He gives them his hand as a pledge and besides the women's approval wins universal recognition throughout his own army for his exceeding propriety of conduct.¹⁰⁰ Here again we have references highly potential and relevant to receiving power. He has a pact made with the queen-mother, following which he gains 'universal recognition'.

However, it is possible to see vestiges of the cult of the goddess in these accounts as well. Alexander bedecks the queen-mother with jewelry and restores her to her previous dignity.¹⁰¹ It is known through other sources that, during the reign of Artaxerxes II, the cult of the mother goddess is restored and her statues are erected in various places.¹⁰²

Following the women's capture, Darius' diplomatic efforts for their release commences through letters sent to Alexander offering money, territories and the hand of her captured daughters in marriage. Alexander's

⁹⁶ Plutarch, *Alexander* XXI. 1 f.

⁹⁷ Diodorus XVII. 37. 5.

⁹⁸ Diodorus XVII. 37. 4.

⁹⁹ *Id.*, XVII. 37. 4–38. 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Id.*, XVII. 38. 3.

¹⁰¹ *Id.*, XVII. 38. 1.

¹⁰² Briant 2002, 676 giving Berossus' account.

response is negative, stating that he is after the kingship of entire Asia.¹⁰³ Accounts of these letters and their responses also include various significant metaphors and merit a separate study.

2.1 *Sisigambis' Refusal to Escape*

A report survives in Curtius and Diodorus that, during the course of a battle, the Persian forces momentarily gain the upper hand and manage to ransack Alexander's camp, rescuing many prisoners and much of the lost baggage.¹⁰⁴ Sisigambis' attendants joyously bring her the news of Darius' victory, telling her that the enemy had been defeated with great bloodshed and loss of baggage, for they believed that what they were witnessing was occurring everywhere and reflected the outcome of the war. Others urge Sisigambis to end her sorrow, but she remains in the same demeanour as before and utters no words. Her colour and expression also remain unchanging, so much so that those attending her could not tell of her inclinations. Curtius cautiously includes that perhaps she feared to offend Fortune by premature rejoicing.¹⁰⁵

Interestingly enough, Curtius ascribes a long speech to Darius addressing his forces before the same battle, in which he heavily stresses the need to free the prisoners, especially his kin who are desperately awaiting their help. He tells his men that they should spur on, for the situation of the captives demands it. His mother, two daughters, son and heir, princes of royal blood, and their generals are held chained by Alexander like criminals. He says if they do not rush on, he himself is like a prisoner too, since so much of his flesh and blood is in captivity. He asks them to restore to him his dear ones, mother and children. As for his wife, he has lost her in that prison. Those who remain are stretching their hands and imploring the aid of the gods of their country, asking for pity to free them from the shackles of slavery.¹⁰⁶

One may note that Arrian¹⁰⁷ and Plutarch¹⁰⁸ also report this victory and the escape of some prisoners, but there is no mention of Darius' mother or the other members of his family. Darius' speech is also lacking in other accounts and only reported by Curtius, who is clearly building up his case

¹⁰³ Justin XI. XII; Arrian II. XIV. 1; Curtius IV. I. 7, IV. V. 1 f.; Diodorus XVII. 54. 1–6.

¹⁰⁴ Curtius IV. XV. 9 f.; Diodorus XVII. 59. 5 f.

¹⁰⁵ Curtius IV. XV. 10–11.

¹⁰⁶ *Id.*, IV. XIV. 22–23.

¹⁰⁷ Arrian III. 14. 5–6.

¹⁰⁸ Plutarch, *Alexander* 32. 3.

towards the point on Darius' mother preferring Alexander's prison to a chance to escape. This would seem to be another calculated propaganda effort built into the reports on Alexander's campaigns.

Significantly Diodorus mentions the joyous female captives who rushed to welcome the Persians, whereas Darius' mother sat placidly where she was.¹⁰⁹ It is interesting that neither Curtius nor Diodorus report anything about the reactions of Darius' daughters, who presumably would have been at the same place. In fact, some time later we do learn that they are still there.¹¹⁰ Obviously the object of this episode is Darius' mother expressing her trust in Alexander rather than in Darius. According to this story, she had squarely thrown her lot with Alexander and would not jeopardize her favoured position with him. The clear premise of this understanding being that she did not have much hope in her son's success and viewed Alexander as the stronger and the victorious king. Again we have another endorsement from the queen-mother, based on the report of the two sources.

2.2 *Susa Visit and Weaving Women*

The next time that we hear of the royal women in Curtius and Diodorus is in Susa, after the capture of the city by Alexander and the potentially ominous incidents there, about which more will be said later.

As Curtius relates it, Alexander had received from Macedonia gifts of Macedonian garments and a great quantity of purple cloth along with the women who had made them. Since his devotion to Sisigambis is as a son, he sends these to her with the message that, if she is pleased with the material, she should train her granddaughters in the art and he is presenting her with the women who can teach it as well. These words bring tears to her eyes, for women of Persia consider working with wool a disgrace.

On learning of this outcome, Alexander pays her a visit and in apology says 'Mother, these clothes that I am wearing are not merely a gift of my sisters but also their handiwork. I was led into error by our own customs. Please do not interpret my ignorance as an insult. I hope I have scrupulously observed your habits. I know that in your country it is wrong for a son to sit down in the presence of his mother without her permission. So, whenever I have visited you I have remained on my feet until you beckoned me to sit. You have often wanted to show me respect by prostrating

¹⁰⁹ Diodorus XVII. 59. 7.

¹¹⁰ *Id.*, XVII. 67. 1.

yourself, but I have prevented it. And I apply to you the title due to my dear mother Olympias'.¹¹¹

Diodorus reports: "Alexander left Dareius' mother, his daughters, and his son in Susa, providing them with persons to teach them the Greek language."¹¹²

The report in Curtius about Persian women despising working in wool, however, is not supported by archaeological evidence. For instance, one may note the Neo-Elamite relief from Susa, depicting a seated noble woman spinning. Behind her stands a female servant carrying a fan. The lady is seated on a stool, knees crossed, with a table in front of her. The legs of both the stool and the table terminate in lion's paws.¹¹³ In the Achaemenid period, this feature is exclusive to royalty, with a significant history in the arts of the Near East.¹¹⁴

Historical sources also inform us of Achaemenid queens engaging in the art of weaving.¹¹⁵ With such documented background, it is hardly possible to imagine this art having fallen in disgrace in the later Achaemenid period, especially when one considers the fact that the production of magnificent carpets and textiles—with women carrying a significant part of the burden—has always been highly prized all through the history of Iran and much of the Near East. For the Achaemenid period, this is testified by historical sources.¹¹⁶ Therefore, it is not clear what the portent of this episode in Curtius is.¹¹⁷

2.3 *Sisigambis and the Uxii*

Following this report, we learn of Sisigambis actually influencing Alexander's decisions and using her position to gain pardon for a relative rebel and his men. Medates, who is married to Sisigambis' niece¹¹⁸ and is a close relative of Darius, is governor of Uxii, a region between Susa and Persia.¹¹⁹ He decides to resist Alexander but does not succeed. Hence

¹¹¹ Curtius V. II. 17–22.

¹¹² Diodorus XVII. 67. 1.

¹¹³ E. Porada, *The Art of Ancient Iran*, New York, 1965, Fig. 43.

¹¹⁴ P. Jamzadeh, "The Achaemenid Throne-leg Design", *Iranica Antiqua* XXXI, 1996, 101–146.

¹¹⁵ Herodotus 9. 109.

¹¹⁶ Plutarch, *Themistocles* 29. 4; Athenaeus V. 179 b, XII. 545 e; Xenophon, *Hellenica* IV. 1. 30; Briant 2002, 206, 300, 747.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Briant 2002, 285.

¹¹⁸ Curtius V. III. 12.

¹¹⁹ *Id.*, V. III. 3 f.

he dispatches thirty men pleading for mercy. Alexander turns down the request of the envoys.¹²⁰ Following this failed attempt, for a long time Sisigambis continues to reject the pleas saying that it would be inappropriate for her to intervene and that she would be taking advantage of the conqueror's indulgence. Furthermore, she had not forgotten that now she was a prisoner, even if previously she had been a queen. But she finally gives in to the pleas and in a letter to Alexander begs for his pardon of the townspeople. She also asks for the forgiveness of her presumption, but she was only asking for the life of a relative and friend who no longer was Alexander's enemy but now his suppliant.¹²¹

As a result, Alexander pardons not only Medates but all the others as well. He even permits the townspeople to cultivate their lands free of taxes. Had Darius been the victor, his mother could not have gained more from him.¹²²

2.4 *Sisigambis and Alexander's Death*

With such a position of honour and power, it is not surprising to learn that, with the news of Alexander's death, Sisigambis also wishes to die. According to Justin,¹²³ she commits suicide. Diodorus¹²⁴ says that she refrained from food and died on the fifth day, abandoning life painfully but not ingloriously. Curtius as usual is more dramatic and, after recounting the rituals of mourning at length, he details a scene that seems to be repeating a graphic representation in art form or a dramatic play.

At last she gave way to grief and veiling her head and turning away from her granddaughters, and her grandson, who fell at her knees, she at the same time abstained from food and shunned the light of day. The fifth day after she had resolved to die, she passed away.¹²⁵

Arrian and Plutarch are silent on this matter as, one would imagine, so would have been Ptolemy and Aristobolus, their sources.

¹²⁰ *Id.*, V. III. 11.

¹²¹ *Id.*, V. III. 12; cf. A.B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire, the Reign of Alexander the Great*, Cambridge, 1988a, 89; J.E. Atkinson, *A Commentary on Q. Curtius Rufus' Historiae Alexandri Magni*, BKS 5–7, 2, Amsterdam, 1994, pp. 68, 81 f.

¹²² Curtius V. III. 13–15; cf. Arrian III. 17. 6; A.B. Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander*, Vol. 1, Oxford, 1980, 322–324.

¹²³ Justin XIII. 1.

¹²⁴ Diodorus XVII. 118. 3.

¹²⁵ Curtius X. V. 19–25.

3. *Alexander and Darius' Wife*

An issue closely related to the propaganda program that was developed on the basis of the presence of the royal women in combat and their capture by Alexander's forces is the question of the manner of his treatment of Darius' wife. This is a somewhat elusive and intricate problem that would seem to defy reason on various levels. What emerges following the examination of the evidence makes it possible to recognize two different propaganda efforts interfering and contradicting each other's aims—or rather different versions of a story that may primarily have rested on myth, replacing each other with their remaining residues creating a somewhat confused and difficult to read picture.

The bent of the argument still, however, is the question of the king's honour—but which king? The audience is still the Iranian public, who witness the buildup of the story towards the elicitation of Darius' concession speech, earned by Alexander for his honourable and gentlemanly treatment of Darius' wife who, despite her pregnancy, had followed the campaign according to custom.

Interestingly enough, while respectful treatment in the case of Darius' mother had meant strong friendly relationship, with regard to the wife it is characterized by staying away, leaving her alone and after her death grieving emotionally and giving her a magnificent funeral.

Although the corpus of information reported about her is small, yet what there is merely exists as a backdrop for accentuating Alexander's chivalry and leading towards Darius' speech admiring him and recognizing him as his heir. The sources agree on her exceptional beauty¹²⁶ and that Alexander never violated her, honouring her chastity. As Plutarch states: "Considering the mastery of himself a more kingly thing than the conquest of his enemies."¹²⁷ Here, one can see that the information about her beauty is immediately followed, as if necessary and complementary to the previous statement, by a judgement of Alexander's manners in this regard. Furthermore, at the same time, she is placed in a position that represents Alexander's enemy, who has been conquered, and yet not.

¹²⁶ Curtius IV. 10. 24; Plutarch, *Alexander*, XXI. 3; Plutarch, *Fortuna* 338; Arrian IV. 19. 6.

¹²⁷ Plutarch, *Alexander* XXI. 4; Plutarch, *Fortuna* 338; cf. Arrian IV. 19. 6; Curtius IV. X. 24; Justin XI. XII.

However, after some time in captivity she dies.¹²⁸ Plutarch states that she died in childbirth.¹²⁹ In a translation of Justin she dies of a miscarriage.¹³⁰ Several sources report Alexander giving her a sumptuous funeral.¹³¹ Plutarch records this incident after Alexander's refusal of a generous peace offer from Darius, in return for the release of his women folk. Further on he states that Alexander soon repented his answer, when Darius' wife died in childbirth and he lost a good opportunity to show great kindness.¹³²

The main interest and primary emphasis of the sources, is Darius' reaction to the news of his wife's death; his initial suspicion of Alexander and latter profound gratitude on learning of his gentlemanly behaviour. His speech following this understanding culminates to his conceding kingship to Alexander basically because of his conduct towards the king's wife.

It is interesting to note that Arrian relates Darius' original suspicion and his subsequent concession speech, without mentioning the queen's death or her pregnancy.¹³³ On hearing from an eunuch, who has just escaped from Alexander's camp, that his wife is as he had left her and that Alexander is the best of men and the least ready to yield to temptation, Darius is said to have raised his hands to heaven and in prayer say:

O Zeus the king, to whom it has been given to order the affairs of kings among men, do thou guard safe for me, if so it may be, the sovereignty of Persians and Medes, as thou didst give it me; but if I be no longer king of Asia, do thou give my power to none but to Alexander. So much does he care for honourable conduct even towards enemies.¹³⁴

According to Plutarch's account of Darius receiving the news of his wife's death, his first reaction is sadness for his wife's poverty in lack of proper funeral rites. But he is told by the eunuch that:

As regards her burial, and her receiving every fitting honour, thou hast no charge to make against the evil genius of the Persians. For neither did my mistress Stateira, while she lived, or thy mother or thy children, lack any of

¹²⁸ Diodorus, XVII. 54. 7; Curtius IV. X. 18–19; Plutarch, *Alexander* XXX. 1; Justin XI. XII.

¹²⁹ Plutarch, *Alexander* XXX. 1.

¹³⁰ Justin XI. XII, trans. J.S. Watson, London, 1897, p. 101; Prof. Phillip Harding in a written communication kindly informs me that in Justin the cause of death is also childbirth.

¹³¹ Diodorus XVII. 54. 7; Justin XI. XII; Curtius IV. X. 23; Plutarch, *Alexander* XXX; Plutarch, *Fortuna* 338.

¹³² Plutarch, *Alexander* XXX.

¹³³ Arrian IV. 19–6–20. 3; it is perhaps significant that Arrian next mentions Roxane who seems to have been confused with Darius' wife at some stage. See further below the chapter XII on 'Plight of Alexander's family'.

¹³⁴ Arrian IV. 20. 3.

their former great blessings except the light of thy countenance, which Lord Oromazdes will cause to shine again with lustre; nor after her death was she deprived of any funeral adornment, nay, she was honoured with the tears of enemies. For Alexander is as gentle after victory as he is terrible in battle.¹³⁵

This information leads Darius to become suspicious and, pushing the eunuch into a corner, he tries to force the truth out of him. But the result is the same and the eunuch continues with more praises for Alexander and consoling Darius with the belief that he had been conquered by a man who is superior to human nature. On learning of this further elucidations of the state of things, Darius is said to be so moved that he even proceeds to confirm his testimony by oaths.¹³⁶ He is said to have gone out to his companions and lifted his hands towards heaven to pray:

O ye gods of my race and kingdom, above all things else grant that I may leave the fortune of Persia reestablished in the prosperity wherein I found it, in order that my victory may enable me to requite Alexander for the favours which I received at his hands when I had lost my dearest possessions; but if, then, a fated time has now come, due to divine jealousy and the vicissitudes of things and the sway of the Persians must cease, grant that no other man may sit upon the throne of Cyrus but Alexander.

Plutarch further adds: "That these things were thus done and said is the testimony of most historians."¹³⁷ Curtius' account is more expanded, detailed and, one might say, in some respects interestingly symmetrical. It involves two kings: Darius and Alexander, who are both informed of the queen's illness or death by an eunuch. Just before her death, Alexander first learns that she is dying and in the continuation of the same report, the news of her death is related.¹³⁸ On the way one of the eunuchs attending to Darius' wife reports to Alexander that she is ill and can hardly breathe. Exhausted by the hardships of the journey and her grief, she had collapsed in the arms of her mother-in-law and her maiden daughters and later died. News of her death was brought to Alexander by a second messenger. The king, as if having received news of his own mother's death, uttered laments and with tears such as Darius might have shed, entered the tent where the mother of Darius was sitting by the corpse. The sight of her prostrate on the ground brought him fresh sorrow. The mother in sorrow had taken the grown-up maidens to her bosom to console. Before her stood her little

¹³⁵ Plutarch, *Alexander* XXX. 3.

¹³⁶ Plutarch, *Alexander* XXX. 6.

¹³⁷ Plutarch, *Alexander* XXX. 6–7.

¹³⁸ Curtius IV. X. 18.

grandson, all the more pitiful because he was not yet aware of the disaster which affected him most of all. Alexander's mourning is so intense that one would have thought he was weeping for his own kin and that he was in need of receiving consolation, rather than offering it. Certain it is that he abstained from food and accorded every honour to the funeral rites in the Persian manner, thus earning the great reputation he still enjoys for clemency and self-discipline. He had seen her only once, on the day of her capture when he had gone to see Darius' mother.¹³⁹

However, Darius is not told immediately of the cause of the eunuch's distress. His first concern and question is whether his wife has been violated by Alexander.¹⁴⁰ But he is told: "that suspicion of yours is indeed far from the truth; for the greatest honour that can be shown to queens by their subjects has been observed towards yours by the victor. But your wife a short time ago passed away."¹⁴¹

The mourning king is still suspicious and, amid his grieving, threatens the eunuch with torture in order to learn the truth from him, especially when he is told that Alexander had lamented her death and wept as bitterly as Darius himself was weeping.¹⁴² Finally he is convinced of the veracity of the report—as Curtius' dramatic details tell us—covers his head, cries for a long time, and then with tears still flowing throws back the mantle from his face and lifting his hands to heaven, says: "O Gods of my fathers, above all make firm my rule, but if it be now finished with me, may no one, I pray, be king of Asia, rather than that enemy so just, that victor so merciful."¹⁴³

It seems that the story has a clearly planned result in sight, which is the ending in Darius' speech and his approval of Alexander for kingship of Asia. While altogether one may note that it is a somewhat irrelevant and silly train of events, leading to the desired goal.¹⁴⁴

It is not clear why the two issues—Alexander's treatment of the king's wife and the king designating him as his successor—are related. It is also not clear why, in this instance, with the chance of getting some news about his other captive relatives, his concentration should totally be centered on the information about his wife's chastity, while the question of

¹³⁹ *Id.*, IV. X. 18–24.

¹⁴⁰ *Id.*, IV. X. 25–27; cf. Plutarch, *Fortuna* 338.

¹⁴¹ Curtius IV. X. 28.

¹⁴² Curtius IV. X. 29–32.

¹⁴³ Curtius IV. X. 33–34.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Briant, 2002, 835 f.

the other captives is ignored by him, or rather does not seem so important in the first place.

A glaring lacuna, in this episode, is his lack of interest in the whereabouts of his son and heir, who is still a prisoner in Alexander's camp. One would imagine that in his situation, especially the matter of the safety of his son and heir, would have taken first priority. No inquiries are made about his daughters or his mother either,¹⁴⁵ while the safeguard of their honour should have been important as well.

His focus is solely fixed on his wife, the question of her honour and Alexander's behaviour in this regard. At the same time, a conspicuous question is 'how long had her pregnancy been in progress'? She dies nearly two years after becoming captive.¹⁴⁶ On the other hand, it is also noteworthy that Darius does not reveal any knowledge about her pregnancy either. If it is possible to imagine that 'according to custom' he would even have needed to drag his pregnant wife to war in the first place.¹⁴⁷

Perhaps we are dealing with the matter too literally and perceiving the text as an actual historical narrative, unnecessarily, in the face of the obvious difficulties, while it is possible to see in these reports vestiges of certain metaphors and mythical understandings as well.¹⁴⁸ Perhaps at the time there was a comprehension of the idea of the country as the king's wife, more or less in line with the idea of the king as the protector of the land and its people.¹⁴⁹ In that case, one can also presume the existence of a nucleus of a story that forms the basis of this narrative, in which Alexander is eulogized as the noble great king who is capable of taking care of the country and protecting it honourably. This understanding—perhaps with Iranian origins and from a milieu with an evolved ideology of kingship—could have developed, in the propaganda efforts of Alexander, into a real life history with a queen of Darius metaphorically representing the country, who is neglected and endangered by the incompetent husband/king, only to be rescued/captured and looked after by the king/protector: 'Alexander' (with a special emphasis on the meaning of his

¹⁴⁵ Cf. E.D. Carney, "Alexander and Persian Women", *American Journal of Philology* 117, 1996, 563–583.

¹⁴⁶ See A.B. Bosworth, *Commentary*, Vol. I, 1980, p. 221 for the possibility of Alexander's misbehaviour. On this question see further below the chapter XII on 'The Plight of Alexander's Family'.

¹⁴⁷ See above.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Bosworth, *Commentary*, Vol. I, 1980, p. 221, "The royal women almost symbolized the monarchy".

¹⁴⁹ E. Cassin, "Le roi et le lion", *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 198: 4, 1981, 356–400.

name: 'protector of men'), although the question of the queen's pregnancy mitigates against such understanding.¹⁵⁰

A different approach would be to view the pregnancy as a motif by itself. In this regard it is interesting to recall that Curtius, in relating Alexander's grief on learning of the queen's death, states: "As if the death of his own mother had been announced."¹⁵¹ Therefore, in this frame of thought, it is possible to understand the ill-fated pregnancy of the dying queen as a reference to a premonition to his own fate, youthful death and the end of his expansive policies.

Although Curtius does not report the pregnancy, he still may be reflecting some vestiges of that tradition with the symbolic motif of the pregnancy which survives in Plutarch and Justin. However, it is also noteworthy that according to some sources, Alexander later marries a daughter of Darius who is also named Stateira, the same as her mother.¹⁵² Therefore, a confluence of the two Stateiras, in the sources, is also a possibility.

Interestingly enough, Arrian as noted, neither records the queen's death nor her pregnancy. All that merits his attention, however, is the developed story of Darius' initial suspicion and his subsequent concession speech.¹⁵³ He aims straight for the crux of the useful material in this complex of remnants of myths, stories and perhaps some fact as well, which is Darius' acknowledgment of Alexander's superiority and assigning him as his lawful successor. Nevertheless, there are indications in his report that reveal his knowledge of the other elements of the story. For example, regarding Stateira's beauty, he is the only historian to say "the most beautiful woman in Asia."¹⁵⁴ After all it was the suzerainty over Asia that Alexander sought. Therefore, it seems that even in his abbreviated version, the core meaning and the important message of the story still survives and is alluded to. In his scheme as well the queen also represents the kingdom, to be. In this regard, it is interesting to note that Diodorus relates the capture of the royal women as: "They saw the whole of Asia taken prisoner with them."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ C.B. Welles, trans. of *Diodorus*, Cambridge, 1933, p. 275, n. 3, on the question of the pregnancy states: "this may reflect a tradition that Alexander had not taken as good care of her as was generally believed."

¹⁵¹ Curtius IV. X. 20.

¹⁵² Plutarch, *Fortuna* 338; Plutarch, *Alexander* LXX. 2; Diodorus XVII. 107. 6; Justin XII. X.

¹⁵³ Arrian IV. 19. 6–20. 3.

¹⁵⁴ Arrian IV. 19. 6 also with Roxane.

¹⁵⁵ Diodorus XVII. 36. 4.

4. *Alexander and the Granddaughter of Ochus*

An interesting little story survives in Curtius that includes certain important information relevant to the question of the presence of the royal women in combat.

After Darius' death and victory over much of the Achaemenid empire, Alexander is said to have become more orientalized, giving way to such vices as long banquets, heavy drinking and troops of harlots.¹⁵⁶ By now the entertainment provided by Greek artists who have been summoned from Greece is not enough, and his discontent leads him to even ask the captive women to sing for him. Their singing, however, proves discordant and hateful to foreign ears.¹⁵⁷ But in this process the shy noble bearings of a captive woman makes Alexander suspicious of her high royal birth. This leads to the discovery that she is, in fact, the granddaughter of Ochus, a previous Achaemenid king. Curtius states that among these women the king noted one more sad than others and out of shyness resisting those who tried to bring her forward. She was exceptionally beautiful and her modesty added to her beauty. With eyes fixed on the ground and her face veiled as far as was allowed, she made the king suspect that she was of too high birth to be exhibited among the entertainment of a banquet. When asked who she was she answered that she was the granddaughter of Ochus, the former king of Persia, being the daughter of his son, and Hystaspes' wife who had been a kinsman of Darius and himself an army commander. Alexander, out of respect, not only orders her release but also returns her property and institutes a search for her husband. On the following day, he orders Hephaestion to bring all the prisoners to the royal quarters and inquires into their rank. Then he separates the common people from those of high birth. The latter group numbered 1,000 and included Oxathres, brother of Darius, who was distinguished not only because of his brother's rank but also for his own nobility of character.¹⁵⁸

There are a number of interesting pieces of information in this passage that call for emphasis and attention. It is not known when the 1,000 nobles had been captured, but it is significant that a prominent figure such as Darius' brother had so far remained unnoticed among the captives, until a special effort was made for the identification of the people of his rank.

¹⁵⁶ Curtius VI. II. 1 f.

¹⁵⁷ *Id.*, VI. II. 5.

¹⁵⁸ *Id.*, VI. II. 6–9.

Considering the circumstances, and the fact that such information survives in the sources, would it not therefore be more probable to presume that the royal women were also captured and recognized at some later stage of the siege, rather than to have them all present with their cosmetics, jewels, furniture, etc., at Issus and during Alexander's early advances instead of sometimes in this period, for instance, when the king is dead and the empire has been seized and looted? Would it not be more rational to think that by now the capture of the unprotected, vulnerable women would be more probable?

However, attention to another feature of the story is also useful and accentuates the possibility of some mix-up and the misplacement of this set of information, perhaps towards the achievement of certain propagandistic aims.

According to the story, what catches Alexander's attention and reveals the lady's high birth is her discomfort with being exhibited amid the entertainment of a banquet, one might add like a concubine whose place would, in fact, be in such a situation where she would be expected to entertain the men, after the women of noble rank had left the scene.¹⁵⁹

In this regard it is interesting to highlight this question in comparison with another text where again there seems to be a perplexity about women's roles, ranks and positions and their men's expectation. In *Book of Esther* a story survives about a Persian king, probably Xerxes, who divorces his Persian noble queen merely because she refuses to appear in the king's banquet—according to his command—in order to show off her beauty to his male guests.¹⁶⁰ The logic of the disgrace is, of course, disobedience which thus sets a precedence for Persian women to disobey their husbands.¹⁶¹ But with the information provided by the classical sources on the different categories of wives, one can perhaps sympathize with the noble queen and see that, in fact, she would have regarded such a command as an insult to her high status and breeding.¹⁶² From a Persian camp's point of view, one may add that she too like the granddaughter of Ochus would have found the situation awkward and the command difficult to follow.

¹⁵⁹ Plutarch, *Moralia* 140 b.

¹⁶⁰ *Esther* I. 10–19; cf. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* XI. 190–5.

¹⁶¹ *Id.*, I. 16–21.

¹⁶² A.I. Baumgarten & S.D. Sperling, "Scroll of Esther", *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, second edition, Vol. 18, 2007, p. 216.

Expanding on this particular subject and the comparison of the Hebrew text of Esther with the Latin of Curtius is beyond the scope of this study. But perhaps it is not too farfetched to see a similar Persian story forming the basis of the two accounts: that of a noble Persian lady under pressure in a royal court to debase herself, but her high moral standards prevailing, due to her noble birth. The final outcome of her fate is different in the two accounts, and in Curtius more sympathetic to the Persian woman. In his version she even gets back her missing husband and her belongings and presumably lives happily ever after in Alexander's kingdom, while in Esther the Persian queen, Vashti, is replaced for good.

If the hypothesis about *Vashti* and *Esther* respectively representing Elamite and Babylonian goddesses is correct,¹⁶³ then one might say that here again we can see the intercession of Elamite backgrounds in relation to the Alexander historians' accounts about the Achaemenid royal women.

With regard to the discovery of the noble Persians among the captives, in Curtius' account, it is interesting to note that here too Hephaestion plays an important role as the one entrusted with the task. As mentioned before, during Alexander's first visit to Darius' mother and the other relatives, Hephaestion is again present although at first mistaken for Alexander. Perhaps originally the two accounts were connected, but due to various different propagandistic exigencies separated, misplaced and removed.

In this regard it is interesting to note Strabo's remark on the presence of much false information in Alexander Histories for, as he states, his historians were eager to magnify his deeds. "The stories that have been spread far and wide with a view to glorifying Alexander are not accepted by all; and their fabricators were men who cared for flattery rather than truth."¹⁶⁴ This is a very important judgement from an academic of the time on the veracity of the histories. It reveals the understanding that certain efforts had taken place in order to carry out certain goals.

5. Episodes in Cyropaedia

An interesting account survives in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* that seems to have some bearing on the later accounts of the Alexander Histories,

¹⁶³ S.K. Eddy, *The King is Dead, Studies in the Near Eastern Resistance to Hellenism 334–31 BC*, Lincoln, 1961, pp. 138–145; Baumgarten, *op. cit.*, pp. 216 f.

¹⁶⁴ Strabo XI. 5. 5; see also XI. 6. 4 & XI. 7. 4.

especially with regard to the question of the presence of the royal women in battlefield.

The Armenian king who previously had been a tributary of Media revolts, defaults on his tribute and in anticipation of retributions starts building fortifications and sends his womenfolk including his queen, his daughters, the wife of his son and heir, a younger son as well as his jewels and chattels to the safety of the mountains. But although he has prepared for war, upon hearing of Cyrus' advance he fears combat and retreats. His officers also scatter and rush to save their possessions. Cyrus' forces reach the mountains and capture the Armenian king's womenfolk, son and treasure.¹⁶⁵ However, they do not remain long in captivity for Cyrus out of magnanimity releases them. When they reach home there is an interesting exchange between the king's son and heir and his released wife about Cyrus' physical beauty, to which she replies that she did not look at him.¹⁶⁶

While the cast of the captured personages in this episode comes interestingly close to the captured family of Darius in the *Alexander Histories*, and the act of sending the vulnerable members of the family and the treasure away from danger and to safety makes sense in this context, this particular reference to self-control finds parallels with what is reported about Alexander with regard to the beauty of Darius' wife.¹⁶⁷

Further on in the same story it is related that the Armenian prince, wishing to express his devotion to Cyrus, commits himself as his camp follower and says that he would even bring his wife along to see his new low position which he is not disturbed by.¹⁶⁸

In another episode Croesus king of Lydia, threatened by Cyrus, sends his womenfolk in carriages to safety at night so to have a comfortable journey. So does the Phrygian king.¹⁶⁹

Another episode tells of the extent of a wife's role in relation to her husband's war efforts. The story is about Panthea, the beautiful wife of Abradatas of Susa who is taken prisoner by Cyrus' forces from the Assyrian camp in the absence of her husband.¹⁷⁰ She receives fair treatment from Cyrus and later manages to bring her husband and his army to Cyrus'

¹⁶⁵ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* III. I. 2–4.

¹⁶⁶ *Id.*, III. I. 41.

¹⁶⁷ See above.

¹⁶⁸ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* III. I. 43.

¹⁶⁹ *Id.*, IV. II. 29–30.

¹⁷⁰ *Id.*, V. I. 3.

camp as a strong ally.¹⁷¹ When getting ready to fight with Cyrus against the allied forces under Croesus, the wife also plays a role. She makes his combat attire of precious metals and material and dons him with the armour, tearfully bidding him courage for the fight alongside Cyrus.¹⁷² He prays to god to be a worthy husband to her and a worthy friend to Cyrus, then mounts his chariot and leaves.¹⁷³ She follows the chariot in tears until he turns and sees her and says: "Have a brave heart, Panthea, and fare-well and now go back."¹⁷⁴

The most interesting is that this not only provides a likely frame for a noble wife's role when her husband goes to war, but the information on the wife donning her warrior husband is also significant and seen to survive in the Middle Ages in the Arthurian romances as the patron lady donning her knight.¹⁷⁵

This genre in other instances also reveals influences from the Iranian sphere.¹⁷⁶ This episode also shows similarities with the story of the shy, high-born Persian lady in Ochus' granddaughter¹⁷⁷ in that among a gathering of women her conduct marks her high bearing.¹⁷⁸

While there are also echoes from the cult of the goddess, she is referred to as "the lady of Susa, who was said to be the most beautiful woman in Asia",¹⁷⁹ and had been chosen by the priests for Cyrus after his victory over the Assyrians and conducted to "the most splendid tent".¹⁸⁰ It is Cyrus who refuses to visit her out of fear of losing his self-control and succumbing to her beauty.¹⁸¹

¹⁷¹ *Id.*, VI. I. 45–51.

¹⁷² *Id.*, VI. IV. 2–8.

¹⁷³ *Id.*, VI. IV. 9–10.

¹⁷⁴ *Id.*, V. IV. 10–11.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Roger Sherman Loomis, *Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes*, New York, 1949, pp. 255 f.

¹⁷⁶ P. Jamzadeh, "Royal rhetoric and minstrel poetry: transmission of formulas from Achaemenid court to Medieval European courts", *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute* 64, 2001.

¹⁷⁷ See above.

¹⁷⁸ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* V. I. 4–5; cf. Briant, 2003, p. 414.

¹⁷⁹ *Id.*, IV. VI. 11.

¹⁸⁰ *Id.*, IV. VI. 11.

¹⁸¹ *Id.*, V. I. 7–8; cf. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* XXVI. 4–5 for another version related about Cyrus the Younger and a Phocaeen woman.

CHAPTER TWO

DARIUS' LETTERS TO ALEXANDER AND THE RESPONSES: IDEOLOGY OF CONQUEST IN RETROSPECT

A subject that is closely related to the topic of the capture of the royal women, as reported by the histories, is that of Darius' letters to Alexander asking for their release in exchange for concessions. These letters and the diplomatic approaches find justification as the aftermaths and results of their captivity, while at the same time some parts of their contents point to the probability of the letters' inauthenticity.

The difficult problem of accepting the letters as genuine in their entirety has been raised.¹ Despite the fact that segments of these letters also survive on papyri, dated to the second century AD, and would seem to make the case for an argument in favour of their original existence. However, the authenticity of this material has also been questioned² and identified as a forgery of the antiquities.³ For this study it is also relevant to review the letters and point out certain Iranian influences, and the insight behind their use.

Plutarch's account is succinct and only giving the primary points expanded by others.

When Darius sent to him a letter and friends, begging him to accept ten thousand talents as ransom for the captives, to hold all the territory this side of the Euphrates, to take one of his daughters in marriage, and on these terms to be his ally and friend, Alexander imparted the matter to his companions. "If I were Alexander," said Parmenio, "I would accept these terms," "And so indeed would I," said Alexander "were I Parmenio". But to Darius he wrote: "Come to me, and thou shalt receive every courtesy; but otherwise I shall march at once against thee."⁴

The account of *Justin/Trogus* is somewhat more expanded, including certain metaphors with significant residences in Iranian mythology, on which more later.

¹ A.B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire, the Reign of Alexander the Great*, Cambridge, 1988, p. 299.

² L. Pearson, "The diary and the letters of Alexander the Great", *Historia* 3, 1954–1955, p. 448.

³ C.B. Welles, trans. of *Diodorus of Sicily*, Cambridge, 1933, Vol. 8, p. 229, n. 1.

⁴ Plutarch, *Alexander*, XXIX. 4.

Darius, having fled to Babylon, entreated Alexander in a letter, “to give him permission to redeem his prisoners, offering a large sum for their ransom. But Alexander demanded his whole kingdom, and not a sum of money, as the price of their release. Sometime after, another letter from Darius was brought to Alexander, in which one of his daughters was offered him in marriage, and a portion of his kingdom. Alexander replied that “what was offered was his own,” and desired him “to come to him as a suppliant, and to leave the disposal of his kingdom to his conqueror.”⁵

Following this he learns of his wife’s death and the generosity shown by Alexander for her funeral.

Darius now considered himself indeed overcome, since, after losing so many battles, he was surpassed by his enemy even in kindness, and declared that it was a consolation to him since he could not conquer, to be conquered by such an enemy. He therefore wrote a third letter to Alexander, thanking him for not having acted as an enemy towards his family, and offering him a large portion of his kingdom, even as far as the river Euphrates, another of his daughters in marriage, and thirty thousand talents for the other prisoners. To this Alexander replied, that “thanks were needless from an enemy; that nothing had been done by him to flatter Darius, or to gain the means of mollifying him, with a view either to the doubtful results of war, or to conditions of peace; but that he had acted from a certain greatness of mind, by which he had learned to fight against the forces of his enemies, not to take advantage of their misfortunes”; and he promised at the same time, that “he would comply with the wishes of Darius, if he would be content to be second to him, and not his equal; but that the universe could not be governed by *two suns*, nor could the earth with safety have two sovereigns; and that he must consequently either prepare to surrender on that day, or to fight on the next, and must promise himself no better success than he had already experienced.”⁶ (my emphasis)

At this point one may only note in passing that the reference to ‘two suns’ comes from an Iranian mythical context, which will be expanded on later.

Diodorus’ account of the letters and the diplomatic contacts is most interesting since it includes certain amazing information lacking in other reports, while at the same time repeating the Iranian mythical metaphors of the ‘two suns’.

After the defeat at Issus, Darius goes to Babylon and gathers together the survivors. His spirit is still high and he writes to Alexander offering a large sum of money for the release of the captives, and the territory and

⁵ Justin XI. XII.

⁶ *Ibid.*

cities to the west of the Halys River, if he would sign a treaty of friendship with him. Alexander upon receiving this letter hides it and forging another one more in accord with his interests takes it to a council of his friends thus sending Darius' envoys away empty handed.⁷

The information about Alexander's forgery is unique to this source. Although its implication is not clear and Diodorus does not inform of Alexander's intentions, nor what the contents of the forged letter 'more in accord with his interests' would have been, yet it would seem to hint at problems with accepting the letters as straight-forward facts or it may point at the probability of mixtures at some level. However, it is significant that the culprit is Alexander himself and the story portrays him as a forger.

Sometime later in Diodorus there is another peace attempt from Darius. Diodorus summarizes the previous one and adds that now again Darius sent envoys praising Alexander for his generosity towards his mother and other captives and invites him to become a friend. He offers all the territory west of the Euphrates, 30,000 talents of silver and the hand of one of his daughters. Thus Alexander would become Darius' son-in-law, be as a son to him and share in the rule of the empire. Alexander responds that the earth could not preserve its plan and order if there were two suns, nor could the inhabited world remain calm and free from war so long as two kings shared the rule. Therefore, if Darius desires the supremacy he should win it in war to see which one would have sole and universal rule. But if he preferred profit to glory then let him obey Alexander but be king over all other rulers, since this privilege was granted him by Alexander's generosity.⁸

Arrian's account of the letters includes some historical background and righteous justifications from both sides. While Darius' envoys have orders to ask Alexander for the release of his family, the letter starts by stating that Philip and Artaxerxes had been in peace and alliance. But on Arses son of Artaxerxes' accession Philip became guilty of unprovoked aggression. And since Darius' accession Alexander has not confirmed the former friendship and alliance between the two kingdoms. On the contrary, he has brought an army into Asia and done much damage to the Persians, and so Darius had to defend his country and ancestral throne. The battle had gone as some god had willed it. But now Darius the king asks Alexander

⁷ Diodorus XVII. 39; cf. Goukowsky, p. 57, n. 2.

⁸ Diodorus XVII. 54.

the king to release his wife, mother and children and is willing to become his friend and ally.

Alexander responds that your ancestors invaded Macedonia and Greece, although we had done them no harm. As supreme commander of all Greece I invaded Asia to punish Persia. Furthermore, you assisted Perinthus in their rebellion against my father, and Ochus sent an army into Thrace which was under our rule. My father was killed by assassins whom you had sent as you yourself boasted in your letters. With Bagoas' help you killed Arses and thus seized the throne unjustly and illegally according to Persian law. You tried to entice the Greeks against me and sent money to the Lacedaemonians and other Greeks. Your agents corrupted my friends and tried to destroy the peace I had established in Greece. Therefore, I took up arms against you. But you started the quarrel. I defeated your generals and satraps and now yourself and your army. By God's help I am master of your country and am responsible for those of your troops who fled to me for refuge. They are not being detained by force, but are serving of their own free will. Then come to me and regard me as Lord of all Asia and ask for your mother, wife and children and anything else you please. For you shall have them. And in the future address me as the king of all Asia. And not as your equal. Everything you possess is now mine. If you claim your kingdom, fight for it and flee not, for I will pursue you wherever you go.⁹

Further on in time we learn of another envoy from Darius when Alexander is busy with the siege of Tyre. They offer 10,000 talents in exchange for his mother, wife and children. They also proposed that all the territory west of Euphrates up to the Aegean sea be Alexander's and he should marry Darius' daughter and become his friend and ally. Alexander responds that all Asia and its treasures was already his property, and if he wished to marry Darius' daughter he would do so, no matter what Darius desired. But if he wanted his friendship, he must come to him. Following this response Darius gives up on negotiations and prepares for war.¹⁰

It is interesting that while in Arrian the letters had focused on the history, in Curtius they seem to be endowed with a certain premonition quality and predict what is yet to come. Furthermore, their tone is at first quite proud. It angers Alexander that Darius applies the title of king to his own name, but not to Alexander's. Darius demands that Alexander

⁹ Arrian II. 14. 1–10.

¹⁰ Arrian II. 25. 1–3.

having accepted enough money to fill all Macedonia should restore to him his mother, wife and children, and then fight for the kingdom on equal terms with Darius, if he wished. And if Alexander could take some advice, he should be content with his forefather's realm, leave what belonged to another and enter into an alliance with him. On these conditions, he would give and receive a pledge.

In response Alexander writes, applying the title of king only to himself, and then ridicules Darius' name saying Darius, whose name you have assumed brought devastation upon the Greek inhabitants of the Hellespontine coast and on the Ionian colonies of the Greeks and then crossed the sea with a mighty army and made war upon Macedonia and Greece. Then Xerxes, of the same family, came with his savage barbarian army, and although defeated at sea, he still left Mardonius in Greece, in order to in his absence he might lay waste our cities and burn our fields. Everyone knows that my father Philip was murdered by assassins with the expectation of a huge Persian reward. The wars you wage are impious and although you have arms, you bid for the lives of your enemies—just as lately you, the king of a great army wished to hire an assassin to kill me for 1,000 talents. Therefore, I am not the aggressor in this war, but acting in self-defence. And the gods also support the better cause. I have already brought most of Asia under my control and defeated yourself in battle. You should not expect anything from me since you failed to observe the convention of war towards me, but if you come to me as a suppliant I promise that you shall have your mother, wife and children without payment of ransom. I know both how to conquer and how to treat the conquered. I pledge that you may come without danger. For the future, when you write to me remember that you are writing not only to a king, but also to your king.¹¹

Curtius also has a letter delivered from Darius at the time of the siege of Tyre, written at last as to a king. In that letter Darius asks Alexander to marry his daughter Stateira and have as her dowry all the land between the Hellespont and the river Halys. While Darius will be content to keep the lands to the east. Furthermore, he advises Alexander to accept the offer and know that Fortune never stands long on the same spot, and power of envy will take charge thereafter. He feared for Alexander that he might like the birds who due to their natural lightness go up towards the stars, would be carried away by the vanity of his youthful mind. For

¹¹ Curtius IV. i. 7–14.

at his age it was difficult to prove equal to such a great fortune. Darius reminds Alexander that he still had many lands left, and would not always be caught in a narrow pass. Alexander would have to cross the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Araxes and the Hydaspes, mighty defences of the Persian empire. He would have to enter open plains in Media, Hyrcania, Bactra where his small numbers would prove inadequate. And when would he reach the Indians living next to the Ocean and the Sogdians, Arachosians and the other tribes stretching as far as the Caucasus and the Tanais? He would grow old in the process of only travelling to these territories even if he did not have to wage a war. Furthermore, Alexander should stop summoning Darius to him, for his coming would mean the end of Alexander.

Alexander replied to the bearers of the letters that Darius was promising him what was not his and was dividing land that he had lost. As a dowry he was offering Lydia, Ionia, Aeolia and the Hellespont coast, all of which were already his own rewards of victory. Moreover, rules were made by the victors and accepted by the defeated. If Darius was the only person who failed to see in what relation they stood, he should settle the question on the battlefield as soon as possible. He should also know that Alexander had not crossed the sea merely to rule Cilicia or Lydia but that he aimed for Persepolis, Darius' capital, then Bactra and Ecbatana and the furthest shores of the East. Wherever Darius could run he could follow, and Darius should stop frightening him with rivers, when he knew that he had passed over seas. Curtius adds: "The kings indeed had exchanged these letters."¹²

One may note that Darius' subsequent letter seems to be in retrospect of Alexander's later advances. It almost smacks of a premonitory praise of Alexander's forthcoming achievements, which at this stage would have seemed impossible and beyond anyone's expectations. Obviously then Darius still had not envisioned fleeing to Bactria and leading Alexander on that route in his pursuit. And even if he had already thought of an alternate escape plan, in case all was lost, it is unlikely that he would have voluntarily divulged it to Alexander.

Alexander's response is in hindsight as well and seems to predict the route of Darius' flight. All throughout, of course, it is repeatedly stated that Alexander was after the kingship of the entire Asia, which pretty much was the Achaemenid empire, as referred to by various classical sources. But at this stage, the revolt in Bactria and Bessus' claim to kingship could

¹² Curtius IV. v. 1–9.

not have been foreseen in order to foretell the route Alexander would have to take, in advancing towards eastern lands, following Darius' death and the defeat of Bessus and his accomplices.¹³

On the other hand, if the letters were to be examined separately, as if surviving independently from the histories, they would seem to point to a pre-conflict attempt on Darius' side to buy off Alexander—yet having his close family members in custody at the same time. For the letters, especially in Justin/Trogus and Diodorus, seem primarily to communicate a message in the lines of: 'Take these monies and territories and be content. Or I shall defeat and destroy you in battle.' While according to the histories Darius had already been defeated in battle, in the course of which his womenfolk and son had also been taken captive.

It is quite possible that diplomatic envoys were sent to Alexander prior to full blown conflict, in order to settle the problem temporarily, if not definitely. Such envoys from Persian kings to the Macedonian court are known from previous times, although not in supplication.

Alexander himself is said to have received one such envoy as a young prince and made an impression with his intelligence.¹⁴ The famous envoy, the group of seven Persian nobles from the court of Darius I asking the Macedonian king of the time for 'earth and water' as symbols of obedient alliance and in the process grossly misbehaving is also recorded.¹⁵ It is questionable whether this report in Herodotus is entirely true, or it includes vestiges of another propaganda effort, by a predecessor of Alexander, also called Alexander.¹⁶

The letters and envoys stated in Alexander Histories may also reveal the existence of certain information on the diplomatic exchanges between Darius and Alexander, but reported out of context and strongly influenced by propaganda; the corner stone of which would be the capture of Darius' womenfolk.

In passing one may note that it is tempting to compare this episode and its aftermaths with the story of the misbehaviour of the Persian nobles at the Macedonian court, attempting to dishonour their women and losing

¹³ See the chapter V on Bessus and Darius' death.

¹⁴ Plutarch, *Alexander*, V. 1–3.

¹⁵ Herodotus V. 17–21.

¹⁶ W.W. How & J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus*, Oxford, 1928, Vol. 2, pp. 7–8; A. Kuhrt, "Earth and Water", *Achaemenid History III, Method and Theory*, eds. A. Kuhrt & H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 1988, pp. 87–98; E.N. Borza, *In the Shadow of Olympus*, Princeton, 1990, pp. 100 f.; Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander, A History of The Persian Empire*, trans. P.T. Daniels. Eisenbrauns, 2002, p. 145.

their lives as the consequence.¹⁷ The two episodes somehow seem to counter-balance each other.

There is also report of a third delegate in Curtius that is again mainly related to the question of the captive women. Darius, after receiving the news of his wife's death, sends another embassy to Alexander. A significant dramatic concession is added that is only reported in this source: leaving his son Ochus as a hostage but asking for the release of his mother and daughters for a large sum of money. While at the same time one of the daughters is offered in marriage along with territories as her dowry. Other unusual surprises are also included such as Darius' delegates passing a judgement on him and offering opinions on manageable kingdoms.

Still the thrust of the diplomatic efforts is the release of the women, on which Alexander rationalizes that they are not for sale, and, if he were to release them, he would do it out of his kindness and as a gift to Darius, and that he does not wage war with captives and women. His enemy would have to be armed. Furthermore, if he accepts Darius' conditions, then Darius is the victor. While he is offering what he has lost. Hence they should fight for the rule of the territories.¹⁸ Some of the difficulties with accepting this report as completely authentic has been noted.¹⁹

As propaganda tools, the overall value and effect of the letters, as reported in the histories, is praise for Alexander. Primarily in the manner in which he has dealt with the captive women, and then as the noble glory-seeking king who rebuts Darius' out of context and seemingly irrelevant concessions, for the supreme prize of lordship over all of Asia. In these versions of the letters and the accounts of embassies, Darius emerges as someone not quite in touch with the reality of his situation, and as a confused man who concedes territories that have already been lost and marries off daughters that are in captivity of his assigned groom, while at the same time seeking their release by offering ransoms that are at the same time their dowries. Whereas Alexander is portrayed as the ever-smart hero, who is not only blessed with good fortune but is also endowed with a superior faculty and a generous soul.

¹⁷ Herodotus V. 18–20.

¹⁸ Curtius IV. XI. 1–22.

¹⁹ E. Badian, "Darius III", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 100, 2000, pp. 241–267, n. 31; see also A.B. Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander*, Vol. 1, Oxford, 1980, pp. 227 f., for a detailed study of the letters and various problems including mix ups; Briant, pp. 832–840.

However, it is interesting to note that vestiges of a propaganda effort for Darius also survives in the accounts of the letters or, in other words, one sees the inclusion of certain information that for an Iranian audience would have counter-acted against Alexander's claim as one seeking Iranian kingship. The reference to 'two suns' is an example.

The metaphor of the two suns draws on an Iranian cultural context that compares the glorious rule of a benevolent king to that of the sun on earth. A prominent source for this is the *Shāhnāma*, the Iranian National Epic. In the story of *Jamshīd*, the first mythical king we learn of the throne raised in the sky, with the world assembled at it and the king seated on it, as the sun raised in the sky.²⁰

The idea as an art motif is also seen in Achaemenid reliefs at Persepolis and Naqsh-e Rostam, where the king is seen on a throne-platform that is carried by representatives of the nations comprising the empire.²¹ It has been argued that such metaphorical representations in art allude to the role of the king as the universal sovereign.²² In this regard a 15th century text is also noteworthy, in that it refers to *Jamshīd* as the second sun held up in the sky.²³

It is interesting that Alexander states this metaphor in the context of declaring himself a universal monarch. Thus it would seem that a narrator by including the use of this metaphor at this point in the histories, was in fact reflecting on Alexander's inadequacy for such a role. Perhaps one can view the story of Alexander finding himself too short for the throne at Susa and causing a eunuch to cry at the consequence²⁴ in the same vein.

It would seem that such subtleties were designed for an Iranian eye, which from the vantage point of an informed background would easily perceive the underlined messages, to the effect of the negation of the intended propaganda.

²⁰ *Shāhnāma*, Moscow, Vol. 1, 1966, pp. 41–42.

²¹ E.F. Schmidt, *Persepolis I, Sculptures, Reliefs, Inscriptions*, Chicago, 1953, pls. 77–78, 102–111; *Id.*, *Persepolis III, The Royal Tombs and other Monuments*, Chicago, 1970, pls. 19–22.

²² C. Nylander, "Al-Beruni and Persepolis", *Acta Iranica* I, 1974, p. 149; M.C. Root, "The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art", *Acta Iranica* 19, 1979, p. 180; P. Jamzadeh, *The Achaemenid Throne: Its Significance and Its Legacy*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1991, pp. 84–105; *Id.*, "Darius' Thrones: Temporal and Eternal", *Iranica Antiqua* 30, 1995, pp. 1–21.

²³ V. Minorsky, "A civil and military review in Fars in 881/1476", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* X, 1939–1942, pp. 150 f.

²⁴ Curtius V. 2. 14.

Another example of reversing the tenets of an Iranian concept in order to expose Alexander's inadequacies for kingship is seen in his response to an offer of Darius. He states "let him obey Alexander, but be king over all other rulers, since this privilege was granted him by Alexander's generosity."²⁵ Here we have a reference to the concept of king of kings, which characterized Iranian kingship.²⁶ However, where the Iranian king had recognized his rule as depending on god's will and by his favour gaining power over the empire,²⁷ Alexander by hubris puts himself in god's position conveying his approval of the king's rule by virtue of his generosity.

The influence from Darius I's rhetoric is clear. However, somehow the very essence of the message has been reversed. Thus portraying Alexander as unworthy of kingship, according to Iranian norms, which would have required god's blessing over the king's rule. Alexander by assuming god's mantle falls short.

Here one may also recall that the same account by Diodorus in regard to the letters and envoys, informs of Alexander forging a letter of Darius.²⁸ Perhaps meant to be seen as another indication of his faults or informing of certain mix-ups in this context.

While at the same time Arrian's account of a letter to Darius includes Alexander calling Darius a king without legal backing and someone who has seized the throne improperly.²⁹

The thrust of the argument is qualifying for Iranian kingship based on Iranian laws and religious ideas. The counter-propagandas address each other and the issues within that frame. In this regard, one may note that the letters in portraying Darius as offering Alexander his daughter and assigning him as his son-in-law, were drawing from the precedence of Cyrus' story. Xenophon in *Cyropaedia* has Cyaxares the Median king and Cyrus' uncle offering him his daughter and as his son-in-law designating Cyrus as his heir.³⁰ Therefore, the inclusion of such information in the histories would seem to work as legitimizing devices for Alexander.

²⁵ Diodorus XVII. 54. 6.

²⁶ Cf. C.B. Welles, translation of *Diodorus*, Cambridge, 2003, p. 275, n. 2.

²⁷ DB I. 11 f., 17 f., DPd. 1 f., DNa 1 f., 15 f., 30 f., 47 f., R.G. Kent, *Old Persian, Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*, New Haven, 1953, pp. 119, 136, 138.

²⁸ Diodorus XVII. 39. 2.

²⁹ Arrian II. 14. 5.

³⁰ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* VIII. V. 18–19.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CAMPAIGN FOR PERSIA IN IRANIAN & ZOROASTRIAN LIGHTS

1. *Alexander's Advances and Tribulations*

The battle for Persia, as reported by Alexander historians, reveals the interference of different sources narrating the events from two opposing views. This is especially revealing in Curtius' account which includes information with obvious Iranian colourings.

The combat ends with Alexander's capture of Persepolis and its destruction, which forms the subject of the next section in this chapter.

The skeleton of the events as far as it can be surmised from the major sources that cover it in some detail¹ is that Ariobarzanes, the Iranian commander and satrap of the province, positions his army over the Persian Gates and builds a wall at the gates, thus blocking Alexander's entry. From this calculated vantage position on the mountain heights he manages to inflict massive casualties without suffering any. The situation forces Alexander to retreat and rethink his strategy. Certain of his prisoners familiar with the terrain inform him of a difficult route through the mountains. In order not to endanger his entire army, he leaves a part of it behind, with instructions to assault the wall at his signal, once he had reached the other side and ambushed the Persians,² or follow the same path.³ Part of this dangerous and difficult journey takes place at night, the details of which in Curtius are especially important from an Iranian cultural perspective.

However, Alexander eventually succeeds. He defeats the Persian forces and joined with Parmenion's men who from the outset had been instructed to take an easier route, manages to capture the province and its capital.

In reviewing the details of the campaign one notes that a specifically underlined factor in the reports is the presence of 'terror'. In Arrian's account the trapped Persian forces experience it.⁴ While in Curtius'

¹ Arrian III. 18. 1–10; Diodorus XVII. 68. 1–7; Curtius V. III. 16–V. 4.

² Arrian III. 18. 5.

³ Curtius V. IV. 16.

⁴ Arrian III. 18. 7.

account terror is more often present among Alexander's forces, and the ambushed Persians, although unarmed, fight bravely and with their massive bodies—interestingly a quality of the *Shāhnāma*'s heroes⁵—drag the armed and mounted Macedonians down and stab them with their own weapons.⁶ The same combat in Arrian⁷ is reported as:

So the enemy (*i.e.* the Persians), caught on all sides, never so much as came to blows, but fled; even so they were hemmed in on all sides; Alexander was pressing hard upon them here, Craterus' troops were hastening up there, so that the greater number of the Persians were forced to turn back to the walls and seek escape there. But by this time the walls themselves were in Macedonian hands. *For Alexander had expected to happen just that which did happen*; and so had left Ptolemy there with some three thousand infantry, so that the greatest part of the Persians were cut down by the Macedonians at close quarters. Even those who were attempting flight, and *the flight had become a panic, threw themselves over the cliffs and perished*; but Ariobarzanes himself with a handful of horsemen escaped to the hills. (my emphasis)

But in Curtius the treacherous experience and terror at the mountains is the Macedonians' lot. It starts somewhat earlier in the chain of events and continues throughout, even despite their final victory.⁸ In this account it is interesting to note that Alexander's otherwise invincible Fortune is also mentioned as failing him.⁹ At some point the situation becomes so desperate for Alexander that he not only seeks every possible council but, due to superstition, is about to summon soothsayers. But even that seems useless.¹⁰ Seemingly he is about to totally give up and pursue a route through Media, but his duty towards his unburied soldiers shames him.¹¹ Finally one of his prisoners, a bilingual man, informs him of the futility of continuing on the same route over the ridge of the mountain, for the paths through the woods only let passage to single files, everything was covered with foliage and the interlaced branches of the trees made the forest continuous.¹²

⁵ They are often called *piltan*, 'elephant-like bodied', *e.g.* *Shāhnāma*, Moscow, Vol. II, p. 157.

⁶ Curtius V. IV. 32.

⁷ Arrian III. 18. 8–9.

⁸ Curtius V. III. 17–23.

⁹ Curtius V. III. 22.

¹⁰ Curtius V. IV. 1–2.

¹¹ Curtius V. IV. 3.

¹² Curtius V. IV. 4.

Next in Curtius follows a highly laudatory description of the province of Persia and its healthy climate.¹³ It differs from Strabo's shorter account.¹⁴ The prisoner qualifies the authenticity of his account by stating that he had been a Lycian shepherd captured by the Persians and acquainted with the terrain through experience.¹⁵ The information about his ethnicity evokes in Alexander memories of a prediction to the same effect: that a Lycian would guide him on the road leading to Persia,¹⁶ thus further enhancing his conviction. Even the prisoner's emphasis on the difficulty of the route is not to dissuade Alexander who replies: "take my word for it that none of those who follow will refuse to go where you will lead the way."¹⁷

Alexander divides his army, leaving a portion in place with instructions and camouflages to carry on as if he himself were present, but if the Persians were to find out, they under the command of Craterus were to attack them and engage their attention. But if Alexander was to succeed in ambushing the Persians on the other side of the wall, they would know that from the resulting noise and should follow the same path, joining Alexander.¹⁸ Curtius continues with Alexander's march through the difficult mountainous path.¹⁹ It runs as:

¹³ Curtius V. IV. 5–9:

For Persis on one side is shut in by continuous chains of mountains. This height, which extends in length for 1,600 stadia, and in width for 170, reaches from the Caucasus mountains to the Red Sea, and where the mountains end, another barrier, the sea, is interposed. Then at the roots of the mountains a spacious plain slopes down, a fertile land, and abounding in many villages and cities. Through these fields the river Araxes rolls the waters of many torrents into the Medus; the Medus—a lesser river than the one which flows into it—in a southerly direction goes on to the sea, and no other river is more favourable to the growth of vegetation, and it clothes with flowers whatever it flows near. Plane trees also and poplars cover its banks, so that to those who view them from afar the groves along the banks seem to be a continuation of those on the mountains. For the shaded stream flows in a channel sunk deep in the soil, and over it hang hills which are themselves also rich in foliage because of the moisture which makes its way to their roots. No other region in all Asia is regarded as more health-giving; the climate is tempered on one side by dark and shaded mountains in a continuous line, which alleviate the heat, on the other by the nearness of the sea, which warms the lands with moderate heat.

cf. Diodorus XIX. 21. 2 for a similar laudatory account of Persis.

¹⁴ Cf. Strabo XV. III. 1, 6.

¹⁵ Curtius V. IV. 10.

¹⁶ Curtius V. IV. 11.

¹⁷ Curtius V. IV. 13.

¹⁸ Curtius V. IV. 14–16.

¹⁹ Curtius V. IV. 17–20.

Alexander himself in the third watch in silent march and not even given the signal with the trumpet²⁰ went on to the route, which had been pointed out, through the paths; he had ordered the soldiers, who were lightly armed, to carry provisions for three days. But besides the pathless rocks and steep crags which from time to time made their footing insecure, snow drifted by the wind made their progress wearisome; for they were swallowed up as if they had fallen into pits, and when their comrades tried to lift them out, they dragged down instead of coming up with those who were aiding them. Night also and the unknown country, as well as the guide—since it was uncertain whether he was wholly to be trusted—increased their fear; for if he had deceived his guards, they themselves could be caught like so much wild game. The safety of their king and of themselves depended either on the trustworthiness or the life of a single prisoner. At last they reached the summit. On the right was a road to Ariobarzanes himself; here the king left Philotas and Coenus with Amyntas and Polypercon in command of a light-armed band, advising them to advance slowly, since cavalry mixed with infantry were marching, and the soil was very rich and abounded in fodder; guides for their routes were given them from among the prisoners.

Alexander and his company after a rest at midday continue the march at the second watch. As much distance traversed still awaited them.²¹ The most difficult part, with significant Iranian cultural features is still ahead:²²

Where the summit of the mountains gradually descends to the more level ground, a great abyss, hallowed out by the rushing together of torrents, had broken into the road. Besides this, the branches of the trees, entangled one with another and clinging together, had interposed an apparently continuous hedge. In consequence, such extreme despair had fallen upon them, that they could hardly refrain from tears. *The darkness especially was a cause of terror*; for even if any stars shone through the clouds, the trees, which were completely covered with leaves, prevented them from getting sight of them. *Not even the use of their ears* was left them, since the woods were shaken by the wind, which made a greater noise when the branches knocked against each other than was proportionate to its blast. At last the long awaited daylight lessened all the terrors which night had made more formidable; the flooded spot could be passed round by a slight detour, and *each man had begun to be his own guide for the route.* (my emphasis)

²⁰ In Arrian III. 18. 7 the bugle is the sign to Craterus, notifying him of Alexander's success in reaching the other side. But here it seems to indicate army's routine, despite Curtius V. II. 7 and the information on the changes in the routines, replacing the trumpet with fire and smoke signals.

²¹ Curtius V. IV. 21–23.

²² Curtius V. IV. 23–26.

The picture painted by this report with so much emphasis on the absolute darkness is that of a lost group of terrified men struggling through a dark and noisy tunnel, unable to see and unable to hear. This description approximates the conception of 'hell' in Zoroastrianism. Among its other features is that of a pitch-dark frightening place where every man thinks he is alone.²³ The point on being alone also occurs in Curtius' report, but with reference to passing through the flooded broken road next day: "when each man had begun to be his own guide for the route."²⁴

At the same time the illustration of the attack by the natural elements of the province on the Macedonian soldiers' capability to see and to hear seems reminiscent of the Achaemenid punishments for certain rebels.²⁵

In other words, by this report one can see a picture of Alexander and his troops as criminals sneaking through the night in order to ambush the Persians and devastate their province and its capital. This vision has us also see them experience, at the outset of their advance towards that ill-intention, their deserved punishment. This also bears a resemblance to what is described in Zoroastrian texts regarding due rewards.²⁶ Thus they seem to have to pass through hell and suffer the vengeance of the elements—that welcome them as criminals—in order to get into Persia.

It seems that this section in Curtius is influenced by echoes from a narration not only sympathetic to the Iranian side but also informed of Iranian culture and religion. Perhaps it is possible to assume that in an Iranian-Zoroastrian narrator's account of this expedition would such associations find their way. Even more so this assumption finds ground when one recalls the extant Zoroastrian sources on Alexander, all describing him with epithets that are otherwise used for Ahriman and other arch-demons.²⁷ In Curtius only remnants of that original Iranian source survive and interestingly follow the eulogistic description of the province of Persia.

²³ *Ardā Virāf Nāmag* 54. 1; 101. 1, M. Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism*, Manchester, 1984, pp. 88–89; *Bundahishn* XXVIII. 47, E.W. West, *Pahlavi Texts I*, Oxford, 1880, *Sacred Books of the East* 5, p. 114; *Menog i Khrad* VII. 31, E.W. West, *Pahlavi Texts*, III, Delhi, 1970, pp. 31–32.

²⁴ Curtius V. IV. 26.

²⁵ Cf. DB II. 74–75, 88–89 R.G. Kent, *Old Persian, Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*, New Haven, 1953, pp. 122–124.

²⁶ *Selections of Zadsparam*, I. 14, E.W. West, *Pahlavi Texts I*, Oxford, 1880, *Sacred Books of the East* 5, pp. 157–158.

²⁷ Cf. *Dinkard* VII. 7, E.W. West, *Pahlavi Texts V*, Delhi, 1969, p. 83; *Menog i Khrad* VIII. 29, *op. cit.* p. 35; *Bundahishn* XXXIII. 14; *Bahman Yasht* III. 34, II. 19, E.W. West, *Pahlavi Texts I*, *op. cit.* pp. 200, 228, see especially p. 200, n. 1 and the pun on his name in Persian, giving 'destroyer'.

The two portions may have belonged to a single rendering, first praising the land and then recounting the perils of the demons who attacked it. As already noted, in the description of the combat that follows also features survive that are known through the Iranian National Epic, the *Shāhnāma*. The unarmed Iranians, who have been ambushed by the sudden appearance of Alexander's forces on their rear,²⁸ still manage to put up a brave fight and inflict injuries by their huge bodies. "Unarmed as they were they seized the armed men in their embrace, and dragging them down to the ground with them by the huge bulk of their bodies, stabbed most of them with their own weapons."²⁹

However, shortly beyond this section the story shifts sympathies and a source not so friendly to the Iranians takes over. It informs that in the midst of the ambush Ariobarzanes got together a force of 40 horsemen and 5,000 footmen and attacked the center of the Macedonian line, causing much damage.³⁰ But it is not clear why the story at this point informs of his hastening "to take possession of the city of Persepolis, the capital of the region",³¹ rather than continuing his gains on Alexander's forces.

In reading this one does not come to the conclusion that Ariobarzanes was withdrawing to Persepolis in order to defend it and continue the struggle from that stronghold. But rather in the midst of his victories he seems to be hastening to take possession of the city as if he himself were a contender for power, just as Alexander or Darius, and needed to beat them with his timely shift.

However, what follows in Curtius' report seems to explain this odd twist, as a needed explanation and rationale for the even stranger news that is to follow. Ariobarzanes was "shut out by the garrison of the city, and vigorously pursued by the enemy, he renewed the battle and was killed with all the participants in his flight."³²

Therefore, based on this report, one comes to another unlikely conclusion that the garrison of the city had had the authority and the necessary following to shut out its commander and satrap of the province and sentence him and the rest of his force—who would have been informed of his aim—to death at the hands of the enemy.

²⁸ Curtius V. IV. 27 f.

²⁹ Curtius V. IV. 32.

³⁰ Curtius V. IV. 33.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Curtius V. IV. 34; cf. Atkinson, 1994, p. 85.

What comes next is equally significant. A man named Tiridates, a treasurer of Darius, writes to Alexander and informs him that he should hasten to take possession of the deserted riches before the inhabitants of the city pillaged the treasures.³³ What is meant to be understood by this report is that despite the Persians' courageous defense at the Persian Gates, even when bare-handed and ambushed, and their strategic planning before hand, building the wall and positioning themselves and their catapults over the rocks and the mountain's heights, in anticipation of Alexander's forces, in reality they were nothing but a bunch of traitors waiting for a chance to turn on each other, on their king, and take possession of his capital and its treasures. Moreover, according to this report, a mere treasurer has the authority to decide the turn of events, over that of the garrison, the satrap, the probably present members of the royal family and any other officials that one would expect at the capital of a vast empire.

So far in the reported chain of events in the histories, the audience has become used to the idea of seeing various satraps submit major fortified cities to Alexander, without any fight,³⁴ due to his presumptive Good Fortune. Although on his way to capture Persia the terrain is so against him that it is said his Fortune came to a standstill.³⁵

But here even the most naive audience would hesitate to accept the results at their face value: the satrap and commander of the army and his forces are barred, a treasurer is in charge and decides,³⁶ and the inhabitants have nothing more on their minds than pillaging the treasures.³⁷ Although in a short while they would have to burn their own richly laden mansions and commit suicide with their families in order to escape the Macedonians' savage attacks on their belongings and their selves,³⁸ during which most brutal scenes are depicted showing the conquerors even

³³ Curtius V. V. 2.

³⁴ Surrender of Sardis by Mithrines and his reward in Arrian I. 17. 3, III. 16. 5; Diodorus XVII. 64. 6; cf. A.T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire*, Chicago, 1978, p. 518; Briant, 2002, *op. cit.* p. 843; Surrender of Egypt by Mazaceus in Arrian III. I. 2; Curtius IV. VII. 3–4; Briant, *op. cit.* p. 844; Surrender of Babylon by Mazaeus in Curtius V. I. 44; Arrian III. 16. 3–5; Plutarch, *Alexander* XXXV. 1; Diodorus XVII. 64. 4; Briant, 2002, pp. 846, 848; Surrender of Susa by Abuleutes in Diodorus XVII. 65. 5, 66. 1–2; Arrian III. 16. 6 f.; Plutarch, *Alexander* XXXVI. 1; Curtius V. 2. 8 f.; Justin XI. 14.

³⁵ Curtius V. III. 22.

³⁶ He even provides information on road conditions: Curtius V. V. 2, "he said that the route was unimpeded although the Araxes River crossed it."

³⁷ Curtius V. V. 2.

³⁸ Curtius V. VI. 7.

attacking each other, as well as the inhabitants of the city, in pursuit of whatever valuables that they could get hold of,³⁹ until Alexander magnanimously orders them “to spare the persons and ornaments of the women”.⁴⁰

Although at this stage one has come to accept Alexander’s easy victories, yet for Persepolis there is no excuse and no indication in the sources that its surrender was imminent and for some reason anticipated. The strongly fortified city could have stood a long siege and fought the aggressors, and oddly it succeeds in refusing entry to the satrap. Ariobarzanes cannot storm the city and is killed in the process.

Furthermore, the treasurer sends for Alexander to come and take the treasures, which by the way seem to be the only purpose of the war,⁴¹ based on the treasurer’s understanding and evaluation of the situation. In his conception the inhabitants of the richest city on earth, themselves loaded with all manners of riches, yet at this dark hour are hungry for and preying on their king’s treasures. That is their primary concern in the face of the tragedy that has fallen on the empire and will shortly engulf them. The rationale is lacking, no matter how one approaches the evidence, unless one was perhaps to presume the overlapping of two separate accounts from different positions of interest. In that case, the problem would come into some focus. Through this assumption one can envision a report that sees the Iranians as brave fighters all through and as people who value their dignity and honour beyond all else, ready to sacrifice their lives rather than succumb to the sacrileges brought upon them and their city, while another report portrays them as cowards and traitors at a loss in face of hardship, with no solutions in mind except treason.

In this regard it is interesting to note Justin’s report on the Persians’ loyalty at the battle of Arbela.

The Persians, on the other hand, were desirous to die rather than be conquered. Seldom has there been so much bloodshed in a battle. Darius, when he saw his army repulsed wished himself to die, but was compelled by his officers to flee.⁴²

In Diodorus’ account of the battle for Persia, a glaring difference with Curtius’ report is seen in the contents of Tiridates’ letter—here said to

³⁹ Curtius V. VI. 4–7.

⁴⁰ Curtius V. VI. 8.

⁴¹ See n. 34.

⁴² Justin XI. 14.

be the governor of Persepolis.⁴³ He informs Alexander that if he were to arrive ahead of “those who planned to defend the city for Darius, he would become master of it, for Tiridates would betray it to him”.⁴⁴ As lacking in conviction even this version of Tiridates’ actions and importance is, it nevertheless would seem closer to a more probable state of affairs in portraying the inhabitants as not only willing but also prepared and planning for the defense of their city.

On the final fate of Ariobarzanes, Diodorus is mute, but he reports on him losing much of his troops during Alexander’s attack on the pass.⁴⁵ Furthermore, there is no mention of him hastening to capture Persepolis and being shut out by the garrison.

In Arrian’s account the garrison is feared to plunder the treasures, while Ariobarzanes flees to the hills.⁴⁶ At this juncture quite unexpectedly the capture of the Pasargadae treasure by Alexander is related. “He captured also the treasure which had been at Pasargadae in the treasury of Cyrus the First.”⁴⁷ Here even the established routine of a traitor surrendering the city is absent, although in Curtius’ account there is a Gobares, governor of Pasargadae, who surrenders it to Alexander.⁴⁸

Justin has an interesting generalization for Alexander’s successive and rapid victories. He wins “not so much by his arms, as by the terror of his name.”⁴⁹

In Plutarch’s account noble Persians are noted as defending Persia.⁵⁰ Probably that is the reason for the slaughter that follows, by the order of Alexander. “For Alexander himself writes that he gave orders to have the inhabitants butchered, thinking that this would be to his advantage.”⁵¹

Reports on the destruction of art work and statues by Alexander’s men are also included in the sources. Curtius provides a vivid picture:

they rent the royal robes, as each one dragged a part into his possession, they broke with mattocks vases of priceless art, nothing was left uninjured or carried off whole, each one carried the broken limbs of statues as he had torn them off.⁵²

⁴³ Diodorus XVII. 69. 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Diodorus XVII. 68. 7.

⁴⁶ Arrian III. 18. 1–10.

⁴⁷ Arrian III. 18. 10.

⁴⁸ Curtius V. VI. 10.

⁴⁹ Justin XI. VI.

⁵⁰ Plutarch, *Alexander* XXXVII. 1.

⁵¹ Plutarch, *Alexander* XXXVII. 2.

⁵² Curtius V. VI. 5.

Plutarch also has a report on Alexander coming across “a great statue of Xerxes which had been carelessly overthrown by a throng that forced its way into the palace”.⁵³

Alexander's next move, according to Curtius, is also noteworthy. “The king ordered Nicarchides to defend the citadel of Persepolis, having left as a garrison three thousand Macedonian soldiers.”⁵⁴ Moreover, there is no mention of the Persian garrison reported earlier at Persepolis.⁵⁵ Those who presumably in following Tiridates' orders had mutinied against their commander and satrap and against their king, only to win Alexander's good will. Tiridates is rewarded by keeping his former position,⁵⁶ while a great part of Alexander's army and baggage is also left there under Parmenion and Craterus' charge.⁵⁷ Tiridates' reward is consistent with the treatment received by other prior deserters and betrayers of major cities.⁵⁸ Perhaps once a pattern is established in a narrative it is easy to repeat it at appropriate junctures. But for the reward of an entire garrison's treason, willingly, probably there was no precedence. And the subject had lost its momentum after serving its purpose.

On the other hand, the inclusion of the information on Alexander establishing a garrison for the defense of Persepolis is useful for underlining the incapability of Darius in arranging for the defense of his capital. As well as any significance it may have indicated in reality in pointing out the change of regime at the capital. However, the silence of the sources on the fate of the garrison that had played such a major role in securing Alexander's decisive victory is noteworthy and merits diverse speculations on the value of the reports.

Alexander himself with 1,000 horsemen and a light-armed force of infantry has to brave the elements again and for no apparent reason venture into the interior of Persia—which is now described as a desolate and barren place⁵⁹ recalling some of the horrors of the mountain's path. Finally they see traces of habitation and meet people living in isolated huts. At first they are so weary of the intruders that they kill their invalids and take refuge in the remote and snow-clad mountains.⁶⁰ But gradually

⁵³ Plutarch, *Alexander* XXXVII. 3.

⁵⁴ Curtius V. VI. 11.

⁵⁵ Curtius V. IV. 34.

⁵⁶ Curtius V. VI. 11.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ See n. 34.

⁵⁹ Curtius V. VI. 12–14.

⁶⁰ Curtius V. VI. 15.

they warm up to Alexander and his troops and receive his clemency.⁶¹ "Then, after devastating the fields of Persia and reducing many villages into his power",⁶² he came to discover the Mardi, a war-like people living in caves in the mountains.⁶³ "But this race also the same onrush of Fortune overcame."⁶⁴ The cynicism is obvious. In undertaking the devastation of fields and villages mostly inhabited by simple rural folks, he still has his Fortune to compensate for it. One may recall the Zoroastrian sources on Alexander's destructions⁶⁵ and wonder if influences have not worked their way into Curtius' sources.

This adventure lasts thirty days, following which he returns to Persepolis.⁶⁶ It may be that some metaphorical significance is implied here, perhaps an allusion to a calendrical cycle of devastation.

2. *Mutilated Greek Captives' Story*

An interesting story variously reported in some, but not all, of the histories (Justin, Curtius and Diodorus) is about a group of Greeks, mutilated and missing limbs, who meet Alexander. Curtius⁶⁷ and Diodorus⁶⁸ place this meeting prior to Alexander's initial approach to Persepolis, but Justin reports it in relation to the sack of Persepolis: "Next he took Persepolis, the metropolis of the kingdom of Persia, a city which had been eminent for many years, and which was filled with the spoils of the world, as was now first seen at its destruction. In the course of these proceedings, about 800 Greeks met Alexander, men who had been punished in captivity by mutilation of their bodies, and who entreated that "as he had delivered Greece, he would also release them from the cruelty of their enemies."⁶⁹

In Curtius and Diodorus this is treated somewhat differently. According to Curtius, Alexander after receiving Tiridates' letter crosses the Araxes river, by destroying villages in order to use their timber and build a bridge.⁷⁰ Just before reaching Persepolis he meets the group.

⁶¹ Curtius V. VI. 16.

⁶² Curtius V. VI. 17.

⁶³ Curtius V. VI. 17-18.

⁶⁴ Curtius V. VI. 19.

⁶⁵ See n. 27.

⁶⁶ Curtius V. VI. 19.

⁶⁷ Curtius V. V. 3-7.

⁶⁸ Diodorus XVII. 69. 2-4.

⁶⁹ Justin XI. XIV; cf. Atkinson, 1994, pp. 104 f.

⁷⁰ Curtius V. V. 3-4.

And already he was not far from the city, when a wretched troop, to be paralleled among few examples of ill-fortune, met the king. They were Greek captives, to the number of nearly four thousand, on whom the Persians had inflicted various kinds of torture. Some with their feet, others with their hands and ears cut off, and branded with the characters of barbarian letters, they had reserved for their long-continued mockery, and when the Persians perceived that they themselves also were under foreign subjection, they had not opposed the desire of the prisoners to go to meet Alexander. They resembled strange images, not human beings, and there was nothing that could be recognized in them except their voices; therefore, *they aroused more tears than they themselves had shed*.⁷¹ (my emphasis)

The inclusion of this point is interesting as well as surprising in an account that otherwise would seem to be sympathetic to the captives' cause.

In Diodorus more information, some clear sympathies, besides justifications and rationale perhaps for what is yet to unfold at Persepolis is also included.

At this point in his advance the king was confronted by a strange and dreadful sight, one to *provoke indignation against the perpetrators and sympathetic pity for the unfortunate victims*. He was met by Greeks bearing branches of supplication. They had been carried away from their homes by previous kings of Persia and were about eight hundred in number, most of them elderly. All had been mutilated, some lacking hands, some feet, and some ears and noses. They were persons who had acquired skills or crafts and had made good progress in their instructions; then their other extremities had been amputated and they were left only those which were vital to their profession.⁷² (my emphasis)

If one follows Diodorus closely, he first seems to be stressing the use of this episode. It is to provoke indignation against the perpetrators, especially just prior to reporting the atrocities of Alexander and his army at Persepolis. Then he states that for some reason they had been carried away by the previous Persian kings. They acquire skills and make good progress. The skills are not identified,⁷³ but the overall report contradicts itself. Whatever the skills, it would have required the use of the hands. Ears would also have been necessary, in order to receive instructions and follow edicts. An especially cruel master would perhaps have found the

⁷¹ Curtius V. V. 5–7.

⁷² Diodorus XVII. 69. 2–4.

⁷³ Although M. Wheeler in *Flames over Persepolis*, New York, 1968, pp. 19–20 seems to see their craft in connection with Persepolis' reliefs.

tongue of an unruly subordinate a burden. But oddly enough they have their voices—by which they are recognized as humans—and succeed in articulating their cases before Alexander and receiving compensations.⁷⁴ Therefore, the report that their only useful limbs had been left intact, at the expense of all others, is difficult to understand. Unless we are dealing with a purely propagandistic episode, intended to provoke resentment against the Persians, as Diodorus states it at the outset, and Curtius' remark on the degree of its impact in comparison to the reality would also seem to point in the same direction. Moreover, Justin's understanding and specifically identifying the episode in relation to the material collected on Persepolis seems to accord with recognizing such nature for the piece as well. While in Curtius⁷⁵ and Diodorus⁷⁶ too what follows this episode is information on Persepolis and its negative influence on the Greek world. Perhaps one can note that what in Justin is epitomized in Curtius and Diodorus is expanded on and narrated, with remnants of the expositions on its nature also surviving.

However, this is not to deny the presence of Greek craftsmen and stonemasons at the Achaemenid courts, especially when Darius I states their skills. In his Susa Foundation inscription, while enumerating the craftsmanship of various nationalities who had built his palace at Susa, he mentions the Ionian and Sardian stone-cutters: "The stone-cutters who wrought the stone, those were Ionians and Sardians", and in appreciating such works he concludes: "A very excellent work was brought to completion."⁷⁷ It is difficult to reconcile this picture with that of a king, or that of his successors, who would need to extract labour by mutilation, but such measures are known as punishments for crimes. Xenophon reports noticing along the roads in Cyrus the Younger's domain mutilated people who as punishment had lost 'feet or hands or eyes'. This information comes in relation to Cyrus' justice which had made his province safe.^{77a}

⁷⁴ Curtius V. V. 7–24; Diodorus XVII. 69. 5–9.

⁷⁵ Curtius V. Vi. 1 f.

⁷⁶ Diodorus XVII. 70. 1 f.

⁷⁷ DSf. 49, 56, Kent, p. 144; cf. C. Nylander, *Ionians in Pasargadae: Studies in Old Persian Architecture*, Uppsala, 1970; M. Roaf, *Sculptures and Sculptors at Persepolis, Iran* 21, 1983.

^{77a} Xenophon, *Anabasis* I. IX. 13, trans. C.L. Brownson, The Loeb Classical Library, 1921, p. 325.

3. Persepolis' Final Fate and the Sources' Arguments

Persepolis, the capital of the Achaemenid empire, as its art program indicated, signified the center of the empire as well as the symbol of its entirety.⁷⁸ Its burning by Alexander, therefore, may well have served as a decisive act that was intended to signal the end of Achaemenid rule, demoralizing Darius, who still was in the process of collecting an army in order to defeat Alexander.

At the same time, the burning of the Achaemenid palaces would also seem to conform with Alexander's Greek politics, appeasing his Greek allies and pointing out its significance as the revenge for Xerxes' atrocities in Athens 150 years earlier, especially at a time when he was experiencing problems with Greek support.⁷⁹ He waited four months⁸⁰ and spent the winter of 331 BC at Persepolis. Before the final torching act, the palaces were stripped of all their riches.⁸¹ Discussions must have taken place with his senior officers, echoes of which survive in Arrian,⁸² and in light of which the Thais story⁸³ can be seen as the sneer of the hostile sources, intended to emphasize Alexander's unworthiness for Persian kingship. For instead of consulting with his generals and in the manner of the Persian kings' symposia,⁸⁴ he has a courtesan for an adviser and follows the policy set forth by her.

In examining the sources, Arrian's account stands out in its clarity and simplicity:

The Persian palace he set on fire; though Parmenio urged him to save it, arguing among other things, that it was not seemly to destroy what was now his own property, and that the Asians would not thus be induced to join him, if he seemed determined not to hold fast the sovereignty of Asia, but merely to pass through it in triumph. Alexander, on the contrary, replied

⁷⁸ P. Jamzadeh, *The Achaemenid Throne: its Significance and its Legacy*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1991, pp. 100 f.; *Id.*, "Darius' Thrones: Temporal and Eternal", *Iranica Antiqua* 30, 1995, pp. 1–21; for Persepolis in general see E.F. Schmidt, *Persepolis I, Sculptures. Reliefs. Inscriptions*, Chicago, 1953.

⁷⁹ E.N. Borza, "Fire from heaven: Alexander at Persepolis", *Classical Philology* 67, 1972, pp. 233–245; A.B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire, the Reign of Alexander the Great*, Cambridge, 1988a, p. 93.

⁸⁰ Plutarch, *Alexander* 37. 6.

⁸¹ Bosworth, 1988a, pp. 92 f.; Atkinson, 1994, pp. 121 f.

⁸² Arrian III. 18. 11–12; Bosworth, 1988a, p. 93.

⁸³ Cleitarchus, FGrH 137 F11; Athenaeus XIII. 576e; Curtius V. VII. 3 f.; Diodorus XVII. 72. 1–5; Plutarch, *Alexander* 38. 1–8.

⁸⁴ Herodotus I. 133; Strabo XV. 3.20; cf. Athenaeus IV. 145; Cf. Briant, 2002, p. 308.

that he proposed to punish the Persians in recompense for what they had done in their invasion of Greece; for their wrecking of Athens, their burning of the temples, and for all the other cruel things they had done to the Greeks; for these, he said, he took vengeance. Yet I do not myself think that Alexander was politic in doing this; nor can I regard it as any retribution upon the Persians of earlier days.⁸⁵

However, he agrees with others that Alexander later regretted the act.⁸⁶

For Curtius this action is closely related to Alexander's drinking problem. He starts his account with an apologia, first praising Alexander's virtues and then notes this important vice and how it contributed to the decision. He mentions the fact that when his enemy and rival for the throne was preparing to renew the war, he was spending more time drinking with women of disrepute, those who accompanied armed men, and how one named Thais herself drunken had incited Alexander to burn the Persian palaces in order to win favour with the Greeks. As a result, a drunken Alexander agrees and starts off the torching of the palaces largely built of cedar. The nearby encamped army rushes to put the fire out but, in realizing the king's intent, it also contributes. Curtius laments that such was the end of the capital of the entire Orient from which so many nations had sought jurisdiction. He notes that it had been the birth place of many kings and that from there terror had been struck into Greece, constructing a fleet of thousand ships and an army that had flooded Europe after bridging the sea and digging through mountains to make a marine canal. He states that Persepolis was totally destroyed and did not rise again. The Macedonian kings took up residence in other cities, which are now occupied by the Parthians. Of Persepolis there would be no trace. The Macedonians were ashamed that a city of such distinction had been destroyed by their king during a drunken orgy. Curtius states that they gave the matter serious consideration and convinced themselves that this was the most appropriate method of its destruction. Alexander however, when sleep had brought him back to his senses after his drunken bout, he regretted his actions and said that the Persians would have suffered a more grievous punishment at the hands of the Greeks had they been forced to see him on Xerxes' throne and in his palace.⁸⁷

The information in Curtius that Persepolis was so completely destroyed that even its ruins were unknown to the Parthians of his time is interesting.

⁸⁵ Arrian III. 18. 11.

⁸⁶ Arrian VI. 30. 1; *cf.* Bosworth, 1988a, p. 93.

⁸⁷ Curtius V. VII. 1–11.

Perhaps one can argue that the fabled magnificence of the Persian capital—the important status of which well noted by Curtius—had had such an honoured place in the later Iranians' hearts that it could not be associated with the sad ruins of what remained of the city in their time. Or, in the stories and memories of Alexander's devastating act, the conflagration had been so massive that it had been remembered as having consumed the entire city, not leaving any traces behind. In this regard, it is interesting to recall the *Shāhnāma*'s account of the destruction of the *Avesta*, the Zoroastrian holy book, by Alexander, the account of which seems to show mixtures with the story of the destruction of Persepolis.⁸⁸ There too, Alexander's act is described as a total destruction committed through a single mad action.⁸⁹

It is furthermore most interesting that the question of comparison with Darius is also included in Curtius' account, signifying the probable source of the story and its overall significance, originating from the propaganda lore of Darius' camp. He notes specifically that at a time when Darius, his rival for the throne, was preparing for war, and in view of the hostility of the Persian population towards Alexander and his men, he nevertheless showed his reckless behaviour and lack of wisdom by partaking in long drinking banquets, in the company of vile characters. Interestingly this behaviour is also attributed to his father.⁹⁰ He too lets his unworthy drinking companions make policy decisions for him.⁹¹

It seems that these accounts, which are not limited to the extant Alexander Histories, all show the vestiges of a certain line of propaganda aimed at displaying Alexander's and the Macedonians' incompetence for Iranian kingship, especially in light of the known values that are stressed for instance in the inscriptions of Darius I.⁹² In the same vein may be

⁸⁸ *Shāhnāma*, Moscow, Vol. 9, 1971, p. 221; P. Jamzadeh, "Achaemenid and Zoroastrian echoes in Firdawsī's account of the throne of *Tāgdīs*", *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute* Vol. 65, 2002, pp. 99–112.

⁸⁹ *mar ān ra sekandar hama pāreh kard—ze bī dāneshī kār yekbāreh kard* 'Alexander tore that apart from his stupidity he did it all at once', *Shāhnāma*, Moscow, Vol. 9, 1971, p. 221.

⁹⁰ Athenaeus X. 435b *apud* Theopompus.

⁹¹ Athenaeus VI. 259f *apud* Theopompus.

⁹² Cf. DNB. 5–8: 'By the favor of Ahuramazda I am of such a sort that I am a friend to right, I am not a friend to wrong; DNB. 11–15: 'What is right, that is my desire. I am not a friend to the man who is a Lie-follower. I am not hot-tempered. What things develop in my anger, I hold firmly under control by my thinking power. I am firmly ruling over my own impulses', Kent, p. 140.

seen the account that the Macedonians are not truth following people.⁹³ The ultimate source of these accounts may perhaps be sought through comparison with Darius I's official propaganda and his specific emphasis on the importance of the negation of 'Lie' in his world view.⁹⁴ Perhaps it is not too farfetched to assume that the same Achaemenid chancellery, in the time of Darius III and even later, was still active and producing official propaganda lines that would influence various groups and their literature. In this regard, Darius I's advice to his successors is especially noteworthy: "Thou who shall be king hereafter, protect thyself vigorously from the Lie; the man who shall be a Lie-follower, him do thou punish well, if thus thou shalt think, 'May my country be secure'".⁹⁵ Through this interpretation the Macedonian onslaught and their time is seen as similar to the first year of Darius I's coming to power, when false kings, throughout the empire, were lying to people and wrongfully claiming kingship,⁹⁶ and when the Lie waxed great all over.⁹⁷ That Darius I's propaganda is involved can be seen in a report of Athenaeus that directly refers to that king's tomb inscription and, moreover, in the context of his ability to exercise control over his drinking behaviour. "Darius, the destroyer of the Magi, had an inscription written on his tomb: 'I could drink much wine and yet carry it well'".⁹⁸ This information may be compared with what is actually stated in Darius's tomb inscription with regard to his ability to exert control over his temper.⁹⁹ But in the process of developing material towards proving Alexander's inadequacy for Iranian kingship, and stressing his drinking problem as well as his lack of control over his temper¹⁰⁰ and the need to put that material in the frame of comparison with the norms and qualities of Iranian kingship—as seen for instance in Darius I's tomb inscription,

⁹³ Athenaeus VI. 261a *apud* Theopompus: 'Truth-telling and keeping promises they regarded as no part of their duty, whereas they readily assumed the odium of perjury and cheating in the most august sanctuary'; In Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* XI. 317–320 a story survives about the high priest of the Jews refusing to assist Alexander on the basis of the oath that he had taken with Darius. This angers Alexander and he threatens that by his attack on them he will teach all men what people it was to whom they must keep their oaths.

⁹⁴ DB. I. 35 f., Kent, pp. 119 f., DB. IV. 2–40, Kent, p. 131.

⁹⁵ DB. IV. 36–40, Kent, p. 131.

⁹⁶ See n. 94.

⁹⁷ DB. I. 35, Kent, p. 119: 'The Lie waxed great in the country, both in Persia and in Media and in the other provinces.'

⁹⁸ Athenaeus X. 434d; *cf.* Strabo XV. 3. 8.

⁹⁹ See n. 92.

¹⁰⁰ Athenaeus XII. 538a: 'He was hot-tempered and murderous, reputed, in fact, to be melancholy mad.'; Curtius IV. XIV. 18.

the reference to that model also survives in the sources, albeit in the context of the intended focus of the propaganda: the drinking problem.

It is interesting to note that Cambysis, Darius I's unlucky predecessor, is also marred by a drinking problem.¹⁰¹ However, one may state that drinking wine was not forbidden to the Persian kings,¹⁰² although moderation and overall controlled behaviour was expected of them, while Alexander drank disproportionately and his behaviour was out of control.¹⁰³ He is often so drunk that he needs to sleep over two days and nights in succession.¹⁰⁴ Eventually the same problems are responsible for the destruction of Persepolis: his reckless drinking, his lack of judgement and the bad company by which he is influenced.

In Plutarch's account, the role of Thais and her momentary damaging leadership, at the expense of the Greek generals whom she also mocks in the process, is even more pronounced.

She, partly in graceful praise of Alexander and partly to make sport for him, as the drinking went on, was moved to utter a speech which befitted the character of her native country, but was too lofty for one of her kind. She said, namely, that for all her hardships in wandering over Asia she was being requited that day by thus reveling luxuriously in the splendid palace of the Persians; but it would be a still greater pleasure to go in revel rout and set fire to the house of Xerxes who burned Athens, she herself kindling the fire under the eyes of Alexander, in order that a tradition might prevail among men that the women in the train of Alexander inflicted a greater punishment upon the Persians in behalf of Hellas than all her famous commanders by sea and land. As soon as she had thus spoken, tumultuous applause arose, and the companions of the king eagerly urged him on, so that he yielded to their desires, and leaping to his feet, with a garland on his head and a torch in his hand, led them the way. The company followed with shouts and revelry and surrounded the palace, while the rest of the Macedonians who learned about it ran thither with torches and were full of joy. For they hoped that the burning and destruction of the palace was the act of one who had fixed his thoughts on home, and did not intend to dwell among Barbarians. This is the way the deed was done, according to some writers; but others say

¹⁰¹ Herodotus III. 34; while the propaganda against Darius III mentions his pleasure seekings and extravagant indulgences in a story on Alexander's drinking as well as extravagant luxury (Athenaeus XII. 539a).

¹⁰² Cf. Athenaeus X. 434e: 'But among the Persians the king is allowed to get drunk on one day, that on which they sacrifice to Mithra'. On this point Duris, in the seventh book of his *Histories* writes as follows: 'In only one of the festivals celebrated by the Persians, that to Mithra, the king gets drunk and dances 'the Persian'.'

¹⁰³ Athenaeus X. 434a–b.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

it was premeditated. However, it is agreed that Alexander speedily repented and gave orders to put out the fire.¹⁰⁵

In going through this report, one wonders if it is a compliment to the fighting Greek men of the army of Alexander to have a courtesan following the army say that she had been more effective than them? At the same time Plutarch notes that she had made a speech too lofty for her station. In a sense, the report contradicts itself. It may be that this is an epitome of a larger account which in its transmission has lost some of its original focus. Nevertheless, one thing is repeated here as well, that Alexander soon regretted the act upon which he had not pondered well, contrary to the Persian manner of deliberations about important decisions, which are discussed repeatedly first over wine and then reviewed the next day when sober.¹⁰⁶ Once again the primary frame of reference is the Iranian norm and in comparison Alexander falls short. Perhaps one may note similar to the Susa throne incident where he is found too short for the throne, a dinner table is pushed under his feet and an observant eunuch cries at the sight and the turn of events.¹⁰⁷ Here too, instead of wise men, councilors to the king and his generals, courtesans attend Alexander's symposia and give advice that is immediately acted upon and put into effect—and soon after regretted. The message is that Alexander does not deserve the throne of the Achaemenid empire¹⁰⁸ just as he did not qualify for the throne in the Susa palace, for he does not measure up to the Achaemenid norms and criteria for kingship. Obviously the audience for this manner of representation and reporting of the events would be the Iranian public who could interpret it and understand the core message.

Diodorus' account is more detailed, including a unique description of Persepolis' palace area, while it states Alexander's personal animosity towards the Persians as the primary reason for the destruction, with no regrets:

Persepolis was the capital of the Persian kingdom. Alexander described it to the Macedonians as the most hateful of the cities of Asia, and gave it over to his soldiers to plunder, all but the palaces. It was the richest city under the sun and the private houses had been furnished with every sort of wealth over the years. The Macedonians raced into it slaughtering all the men whom they met and plundering the residences; many of the houses belonged to the

¹⁰⁵ Plutarch, *Alexander* 38.

¹⁰⁶ Herodotus I. 133; Strabo XV. 3. 20; Athenaeus IV. 145; Briant, 2002, p. 308.

¹⁰⁷ Diodorus XVII. 66. 3–5.

¹⁰⁸ See n. 78.

common people and were abundantly supplied with furniture and wearing apparel of every kind. Here much silver was carried off and no little gold, and many rich dresses gay with sea purple or with gold embroidery became the prize of the victors. The enormous palaces, famed throughout the whole civilized world, fell victim to insult and utter destruction.

Diodorus continues with a detailed description of the Macedonians' atrocities as well as their rivalries in taking possession of the rich loot. He notes that the treasure accumulated since Cyrus' time had now fallen to Alexander who sent for a vast number of mules and 3,000 pack camels in order to transport it. He next describes Persepolis as a citadel surrounded by a system of triple walls and bronze gates at each side, and mentions the royal hill containing the royal tombs. His account continues with the Thais story, also stressing the role of women, but here as destroying the Persians' accomplishments.¹⁰⁹

Justin's report is quite brief, as noted in the previous section and it merely says: "Next he took Persepolis, the metropolis of the kingdom of Persia, a city which had been eminent for many years, and which was filled with the spoils of the world, as was now first seen at its destruction."¹¹⁰ Justin neither gives a reason nor mentions any specific culprit although the overall impression imparted is that some ill-will had caused the destruction.

In conclusion to this chapter, it is possible to see the act as a political one, either addressing Darius in his on-going continued struggle, or seeking attention and support from the faltering Greeks. However, sources and accounts originating from the Iranian milieu had included the Thais story as a means of amplifying Alexander's faults and inadequacies. This may be stressed in view of the fact that archaeological evidence negates a spontaneous rash moment deciding the act for the terrace had been first stripped clean of its valuables.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Diodorus XVII. 70–72.

¹¹⁰ Justin XI. 14, Watson, p. 104.

¹¹¹ See n. 81.

CHAPTER FOUR

DARIUS' LAST DAYS & COUNTER-PROPAGANDAS

Accounts of Darius' last days and death seem to be mostly based on dramatic propaganda as well as remnants of myths and folklore. In the histories, the accounts have a specific purpose. They serve the aim of establishing Alexander as the rightful successor to Darius and the Achaemenid kingship. This is especially significant in view of the fact that at the time a relative of Darius is also in the scene and claiming the throne.

The basic frame and much of the content of the story is formed by the dirges and passion of a noble king who suffers because of the treason of some of his close followers and relatives. Although based on the same accounts, there is no reason for their treacherous scheme to succeed. However, they manage to bring about a dishonourable as well as a painful death for the king. It is due to their mischief that he is robbed of a courageous last stand that he had prepared for and was ready to see it through to the very end, as stated in his speech.¹

According to the accounts, the treachery of the traitors subjects him to the degradation of the confinement to a covered wagon, one may perhaps note very much similar to the manner of women's transport.² Finally he is wounded and left to die alone—an odd dramatization that only provides a necessary situation in his very last minutes during which he appoints Alexander as his successor, the noble legitimate king who rightfully arranges for his royal burial, as a true heir would be expected to do.

In the histories, the importance of the funeral rites for the king had previously been emphasized. Darius' women-folk when first captured and had thought that the king was dead, had pleaded with Alexander to allow them enough time to see to the king's burial according to custom.³ The Zoroastrian religion of the Achaemenids would also have required the

¹ Curtius V. VIII. 6–17; cf. Arrian III. 19. 3.

² Cf. Plutarch, *Themistocles* XXVI. 4, trans. B. Perrin, Loeb Classical Library, London, 1914, Vol. 2, pp. 71–73; Plutarch, *Moralia* 173 F, trans. F.C. Babbitt, London, 1927, Vol. 3, p. 21; Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* V. 3, trans. B. Perrin, London, 1914, Vol. 11, p. 137.

³ See above chapter I on the 'Plight of Achaemenid Royal Women'.

descendants to see to the proper rites for the soul.⁴ In this relation it is interesting to note that Darius in his last hour condemns his own kin, but praises Alexander.⁵ This is of course directed towards Bessus the usurper, who is of Achaemenid descent and related to Darius and has rallied some support among the troops under his command.⁶ Although it is not clear why the usurper leaves the king alive and only wounded,⁷ it is probably in order to provide the dramatists with the needed material.

Symbolism and metaphors play a significant role in the episode and function towards conveying the idea of re-birth and succession. Symbolism of water, for instance, is present in almost all the sources.⁸ Darius' injured body is found near a spring, and just before his death he gives his right hand to Alexander through an intermediary making a pact with him.⁹ Alexander covers Darius' dead body with his own cloak when reaching him,¹⁰ which may be seen as a counter-poise to his own coronation as an Achaemenid king and taking up Cyrus' robe.¹¹ Bessus seems to be offering to serve only as a substitute king until the ill-omen has passed and Darius can be restored safely back to power.¹² Interestingly and again in a counter-poise to Darius' final fate, Alexander too in his last days encounters the same phenomenon.¹³ It is perhaps noteworthy that Justin in his epitome once again at the outset notes the core significance of the episode: the question of succession. In his book the Parthians are the Achaemenids' true heirs.

Meanwhile, to gain the favour of the conqueror, Darius was confined in golden fetters and chains in a village of the Parthians named Thara; the immortal gods, I suppose, ordaining that the empire of the Persians should have its termination in the country of those who were to succeed them in dominion. Alexander, hastening his march, arrived there on the following

⁴ Cf. M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. II, *Under the Achaemenians*, Leiden, 1982, pp. 70–71.

⁵ Justin XI. XV.

⁶ Curtius V. IX. 8; Arrian III. 21. 4.

⁷ Cf. Arrian III. 21. 5; Bosworth, 1988a, p. 96; Diodorus XVII. 73. 2 briefly notes Darius' murder by Bessus.

⁸ Justin XI. XV; Plutarch, *Alexander* XLII. 4, XLIII. 2; Curtius V. XIII. 24.

⁹ Justin XI. XV.

¹⁰ Plutarch, *Alexander* XLIII. 3; Plutarch, *Fortuna* 332 F.

¹¹ Cf. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* III. 2–3.

¹² Curtius V. IX. 3–8; On 'substitute king' see A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, Chicago, 1964, p. 100; see also C. Nylander, "Darius III—the coward king, point and counterpoint", eds. J. Carlsen *et al.*, *Alexander the Great, Reality and Myth*, Rome, 1993, p. 152, n. 80.

¹³ Arrian VII. 24. 3; Briant, 2002, pp. 726, 863.

day, when he found that Darius had been conveyed from the place in the night, in a covered vehicle. Directing his army to follow him, he pursued the flying prince with six thousand cavalry. On his march he had several severe encounters, and advanced many miles without finding any traces of Darius. But while he was allowing the horses time to rest, one of the soldiers, going to a neighbouring spring, found Darius in the vehicle, wounded in several places, but still alive. One of the Persian captives being brought forward, the dying prince, knowing from his voice that he was his countryman, said that "he had at least this comfort in his present sufferings, that he should speak to one who could understand him, and that he should not utter his last words in vain." He then desired that the following message should be given to Alexander: that "he died without having done him any acts of kindness, but a debtor to him for the greatest, since he had found his feelings towards his mother and children to be those of a prince, not of a foe; that he had been more happy in his enemy than in his relations, for by his enemy life had been granted to his mother and children, but taken from himself by his relatives, to whom he had given both life and kingdoms; and that such a requital must therefore be made them as his conqueror should please. For himself, that he made the only return to Alexander which he could at the point of death, by praying to the gods above and below, and the powers that protected kings, that the empire of the world might fall to his lot. That he desired the favour of a decent rather than a magnificent funeral; and, as to avenging his death, it was not his cause alone that was concerned, but precedent, and the common cause of all kings, which it would be both dishonourable and dangerous for him to neglect; since, in regard to vengeance, the interests of justice were affected, and, in regard to precedent, those of the general safety. To this effect he gave him his right hand, as the only pledge of a king's faith to be conveyed to Alexander." Then, stretching out his hand, he expired. When this intelligence was communicated to Alexander, he went to see the body of the dead monarch, and contemplated with tears a death so unsuitable to his dignity. He also directed his corpse to be buried as that of a king, and his relics to be conveyed to the sepulchres of his ancestors.¹⁴

In Plutarch's account the symbolism of water in relation to re-birth and continuity is even more stressed. Men who are carrying water for their sons, instead offer it to Alexander.¹⁵ He, however, refuses to accept it. For although thirsty, out of respect for his fellow comrades prefers to tolerate the discomfort a while longer, like them.¹⁶ His men finally find Darius and offer the dying king water:

¹⁴ Justin XI. XV.

¹⁵ Plutarch, *Alexander*, XLII. 4.

¹⁶ Plutarch, *Alexander* XLII. 5.

So, then, all were alike ready and willing; but only sixty, they say, were with Alexander when he burst into the camp of the enemy. There, indeed, they rode over much gold and silver that was thrown away, passed by many wagons full of women and children which were coursing hither and thither without their drivers, and pursued those who were foremost in flight, thinking that Darius was among them. But at last they found him lying in a wagon, his body all full of javelins, at the point of death. Nevertheless, he asked for something to drink, and when he had drunk some cold water which Polystratus gave him, he said to him: "My man, this is the extremity of all my ill-fortune, that I receive good at thy hands and am not able to return it; but Alexander will requite thee for thy good offices, and the gods will reward Alexander for his kindness to my mother, wife, and children; to him, through thee, I give this right hand." With these words he took the hand of Polystratus and then expired. When Alexander came up, he was manifestly distressed by what had happened, and unfastening his own cloak threw it upon the body and covered it. And when, at a later time, he found Bessus, he had him rent asunder. Two straight trees were bent together and a part of his body fastened to each; then when each was released and sprang vigorously back, the part of the body that was attached to it followed after. Now, however, he sent the body of Darius, laid out in royal state, to his mother, and admitted his brother, Exathres, into the number of his companions.¹⁷

Arrian's account is somewhat different. The dramatic facade is down played, and the symbolic elements, overtly obvious in some of the others, may only be extracted here, from the mass of a mainly militarily oriented account. However, in this report, the core message of the episode 'Alexander the heir designate to Darius' is also clear.

Amid an evaluation of Darius' character as a weakling and a man incapable of warfare,¹⁸ it gives a summary of his sad lot due to his men's treason¹⁹ and shifts the focus to Alexander's noble treatment and honourable conduct of his dead body: "His lot in death was the royal tomb, his children nurtured and educated by Alexander as if he were still on the throne, and Alexander for his daughter's bridegroom."²⁰

However, it also informs that Darius had prepared for another battle with Alexander while in Ecbatana and was counting on the arrival of additional new forces from the Scythians and Cadusians, which nevertheless did not materialize and put him to flight again.²¹

¹⁷ *Id.*, XLIII. 1–3.

¹⁸ Arrian III. 22. 2.

¹⁹ Arrian III. 22. 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Arrian III. 19. 1–4.

Alexander follows the fleeing Persians on a pursuit that is as difficult for both armies and both sides diminish on the road from Media towards the eastern provinces.²² At Rhagae he learns of Darius' arrest by Bessus satrap of Bactria, Barsaentes satrap of the Archotians and the Drangians and Nabarzanes commander of the cavalry.²³ The news makes Alexander move faster, taking with him a lean and rapid force.²⁴ He later learns of Darius' confinement to a closed wagon and Bessus' assumption of sovereignty and receiving the salutes of the Bactrian cavalry and some of the Persian forces, but not all the Persians and not the Greek mercenaries. They seemingly had parted company with others and moved towards the hills.²⁵ This last piece of information is even more problematic and raises the questions of why and how? If this group of Persians and Greeks were still loyal to Darius,²⁶ why did they just leave the scene peacefully rather than fighting for his release? It is also significant that their departure neither creates any problems with the traitors and they are willing to let a group of armed men antagonistic to their cause merely leave the scene—with the possibility of joining Alexander's forces,²⁷ informing their position, or gathering a force to themselves and creating an additional threat, in such volatile times. These questions are neither raised nor alluded to. And what follows in the text is a rationale for keeping Darius alive by the rebel forces, despite the fact that, for them at least, Bessus is now the king. Based on this report, one may even conclude that in their belief Alexander was interested in the capture of Darius as a person, and not as the king.

Those who had seized Darius had decided that if they should learn that Alexander was pursuing them they would give up Darius to Alexander and make good terms for themselves. Should they learn that Alexander had turned back they would collect as large an army as they could and join in preserving their empire. Bessus was in command for the time being both from his relationship to Darius and because this event took place in his satrapy.²⁸

A reference to the idea of having Bessus function as a 'substitute king' is discernible in the statement that he is to be the sovereign for 'the time

²² Arrian III. 20. 1–2.

²³ Arrian III. 21. 1.

²⁴ Arrian III. 21. 2.

²⁵ Arrian III. 21. 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Arrian III. 23. 7.

²⁸ Arrian III. 21. 5.

being'. Although later on, based on the reports received, Bessus' aspirations for kingship are clearly obvious.²⁹

However, in the continuation of the report of the chase, we learn that Alexander now moves even faster, despite the growing fatigue of his men and the horses.³⁰ He receives information on the Persians' determination to continue their journey by night. He inquires about a short cut and is told of a difficult route that has no 'water'.³¹ While it is not clear where exactly the destination is, all that we know is that he is only following a group of Persians who, on the one hand, are following a new king and leader, and, on the other hand, are on the flight with the former king, who is now, however, imprisoned by the new king.

The account proceeds with Alexander dividing his forces, leaving a segment to follow on a slower pace on Bessus' trail. He himself travels by night with a select group and by dawn reaches the Persians who are marching at ease and without arms. While only a few hinder his passage, the majority, upon seeing Alexander, flee.³²

It is tempting to see the vestiges of a watered-down version of what in Curtius is well dramatized on Alexander's march on Persis, traveling by night on a perilous road and surprising the unarmed Persians, who nevertheless in that account put up a courageous fight and inflict significant damages.³³

Bessus and his group on their flight take Darius with them for a while longer in the closed wagon, but with Alexander approaching they wound Darius and leave him behind. Darius dies before the arrival of Alexander,³⁴ who sends the body to Persepolis, ordering it to be buried in the royal tombs as the kings before him.³⁵

Further on we again hear of Bessus who eventually receives a totally different treatment from Alexander.³⁶ His rebellion had posed a serious challenge to the Macedonians and its quenching did not come about easy.³⁷

²⁹ Arrian III. 25. 3.

³⁰ Arrian III. 21. 6.

³¹ Arrian III. 21. 7.

³² Arrian III. 21. 8–9.

³³ Curtius V. IV. 4–32; Previously it was argued that the reports seem to indicate Ariobarzanes' claim to kingship, by having him want to storm Persepolis. Are we seeing a mix up with Bessus?

³⁴ Arrian III. 21. 10.

³⁵ Arrian III. 22. 1.

³⁶ Arrian III. 30. 1–5.

³⁷ Cf. Arrian III. 25. 5–30. 5; Justin XII. V; Diodorus 17. 74. 1 f., 83. 7–8; Curtius VI. III. 9 f., VI. VI. 13 f., VII. IV. 1 f., VII. V. 19 f., VII. X. 10.

Diodorus' report on Darius' final days is condensed:

When all this was over (*i.e.* sack of Persepolis), Alexander visited the cities of Persis, capturing some by storm and winning over others by his own fair dealing. Then he set out after Dareius. The Persian king had planned to bring together the armed forces of Bactria and the other satrapies, but Alexander was too quick for him. Dareius directed his flight toward the city of Bactra with thirty thousand Persians and Greek mercenaries, but in the course of this retirement he was seized and murdered by Bessus, the satrap of Bactria. Just after his death, Alexander rode up in hot pursuit with his cavalry, and, finding him dead, gave him a royal funeral. Some, however, have written that Alexander found him still breathing and commiserated with him on his disasters. Darius urged him to avenge his death, and Alexander, agreeing, set after Bessus, but the satrap had a long start and got away into Bactria, so Alexander suspended the chase and returned.³⁸

Curtius' account is more detailed and dramatized. Unfortunately the text breaks up just prior to Darius' very end.³⁹ In following Darius' preparations in Ecbatana, it includes a moving speech by him and carefully brings in Bessus. In Ecbatana, capital of Media, which for Parthians (Curtius' time) was a summer residence, Darius had decided to go to Bactra but fearing Alexander's speed changed his route. He prepared himself for battle. His troop of 30,000 infantry included 4,000 Greeks, the most loyal to him. He has 4000 slingers and archers, and 3,300 horsemen, mostly Bactriani under Bessus' command satrap of Bactra. Darius summons a council and makes a speech praising their courage and loyalty even in the face of defeat and treason. He promises them that, whatever the outcome, the future generations will remember their sacrifice. He says that he has the choice either to become Alexander's satrap or to put up a fight and reclaim his kingdom. He prays to god never to have anyone remove his diadem or bestow it to him or to lose his empire in his life time. He encourages them to follow his example and not accept Macedonian overlordship. He reminds them of the honour of their forefathers, who gloriously held rule over the entire Orient, to whom Macedonia paid tribute and by whom many fleets of ships were sent against Greece. He implores them to assume the courage worthy of their fame and their nation. His speech, however, fails its purpose. His men are fearful of Alexander and do not know what to say. The eldest, Artabazus, responds by saying that they, not fearing death, are all ready to follow him in battle. While others also approve, Nabarzanes, one

³⁸ Diodorus XVII. 73. 1–4.

³⁹ Curtius V. XIII. 25 f.

of the conspirators who with Bessus had schemed to surrender Darius to Alexander, puts forward a suggestion. He presents it as a necessary remedy that, although unpleasant, may cure the problem and put things right. He argues that obviously the king's fortune has failed him and gods are against him. Therefore there is need of a new beginning and new omens. He should hand over the rule temporarily to another and when as a result the enemy withdraws from Asia, he will receive back his kingship. And this is possible since they still have Bactra, Indi and the Saceas and the greater resources for war is left. He then suggests that they should go to Bactra, which is the safest place, and let Bessus its satrap become king. Once affairs are settled he will restore the kingship back to Darius the legitimate king.⁴⁰

In Curtius' account it is clear that Bessus is using the pretext of the 'substitute king', in view of the times, to gain power. He is in an advantageous position and is capitalizing on his assets at this critical moment. Realizing that Darius needs him, his army and the safety of his province, he is, on the one hand, humbly offering himself as the sacrificial substitute and, on the other hand, hinting at his cards and trying to bully his way up over the king.

It is interesting that the reaction ascribed to Darius clearly refers to a qualification of kingship: control of anger.⁴¹ Here however, due to the circumstance, Darius is forgiven and Curtius states that it is not surprising that Darius lost control of his anger and drawing his sword accused Nabarzanes of treason. But Bessus and the Bactrians surrounded the king allowing Nabarzanes to get away, followed by Bessus and the rest of the Bactrians. They form a separate camp. Artabazus, the king's general, tries to soothe Darius by explaining Bessus' attempt as a folly resulting from the difficult times. Furthermore, he warns Darius against alienating the remaining forces. As a result Darius withdraws himself into a sad isolation in his tent. This brings the camp into near chaos with varied impulses, no longer taking council for the common good. The Greeks under Patron get armed and ready. The Persians form a separate group and are solicited by Bessus to join him, enticing them with the riches of his province of Bactra and frightening them with the danger of staying where they were. The Persians, however, respond that it is impious to desert the king. In the meantime, Artabazus functions as the commander and establishes him-

⁴⁰ Curtius V. VIII–XI. 8.

⁴¹ See above.

self effectively with everyone of the Persians and manages to bring Darius to address the situation as well. Curtius then informs that Bessus and Nabarzanes had resolved to kill Darius for, as long as he lived, they could not hope to gain power, the reason being the mere majesty of the king for the Persians, who in response to the mere mention of his name assemble, and veneration for his former fortune attended him even in adversity.⁴²

Curtius follows with stating the resources of Bactria as the traitors' support and the reason for their presumptions, thinking their power greater than those of the Persians and the Macedonians.⁴³ They deliberated on all the possibilities and decided to seize the king with their own troops. Afterwards they would inform Alexander and if he rejected their betrayal, they would kill Darius and leave for Bactria with their forces.⁴⁴ Although it is not clear how they expected to gain the Persian kingship if Alexander's response was to be positive and he would want to receive the Persian king alive.

Nevertheless even at this stage Darius' capture is not easy for he has the loyalty of thousands of Persians and the Greek mercenaries. So, they devise a trick. They send emissaries to the Persians asking for forgiveness, while at the same time trying to tempt them to defect and join the Bactrians.⁴⁵

Artabazus informs the traitors that the king was ready to forgive them. Therefore, next day at dawn Bessus and Nabarzanes together with the Bactrian soldiers come to the vestibule of the king's tent pretending customary service. Here Curtius' narrative becomes quite picturesque. He portrays Darius as having given the signal for marching, mounts his chariot according to his former custom, while Bessus and his cohorts have prostrated themselves on the ground. Their entreaties move the kind king to tears and forgiveness.⁴⁶

Curtius' account next approximates a dramatic passion play when we learn that now, amid the treachery of some of the Bactrians and the naiveté of the Persians, a group enters the scene with wisdom and loyalty: the Greek mercenaries under the leadership of Patron, who offers the king the protection of his camp. Patron orders his men to get armed and stand ready, himself following the king's chariot trying to speak with him and

⁴² Curtius V. IX. 9–X. 2.

⁴³ Curtius V. X. 3–5.

⁴⁴ Curtius V. X. 5–6.

⁴⁵ Curtius V. X. 7–9.

⁴⁶ Curtius V. X. 10–15.

relate his premonition of Bessus' design. But Bessus, sensing the same fear, keeps nearby. The king finally notices the Greek general and sends his eunuch to see if he wishes to speak with him. Patron draws near and the conversation with the king is carried out in Greek.⁴⁷ Patron first reminds him that the Greek soldiers who remain are companions of his fortune and ready to follow him in place of their native homeland to wherever the king chooses. They consider themselves linked with his prosperity and adversity. Therefore, he implores the king to pitch his tent in their camp and allow them to be his bodyguards. Darius does not show that he is alarmed and asks Patron the reason for his advice. With Bessus nearby, the Greek frankly reveals the plot. Darius, however, replies that, although he is certain of Patron's loyalty, he would not leave his own countrymen. Whatever fortune had in store for him, he would endure it among his subjects. And he was living unduly if his own men did not wish him alive. Patron disappointed returns to his troops, expecting the worst to come.⁴⁸

At this point the situation becomes somewhat murky. There is even a hint at the reversal of roles, with the possibility of seeing the Greek as the traitor, who is seeking Alexander's support by attempting to capture Darius. Curtius states Bessus' intent to kill Darius as soon as possible, but thinks it more to his advantage to deliver him alive to Alexander. The underlying logic is Alexander's good nature. He first approaches Darius and entreats against Patron, saying that as a mercenary he was ready to betray him to Alexander for a reward and then asserts his own innocence calling upon his country's gods as witnesses. Darius is silent and seemingly acceptable to his remarks, although he knows the Greek was speaking the truth. Under the circumstances it was dangerous to pretend otherwise for the Greek forces were only 4,000 while the Bactrians numbered 30,000. Moreover, by distrusting his countrymen he would in fact be encouraging treason. In any event, at this juncture the narrator finds a chance to turn the story towards praising Alexander and have Darius remind Bessus of Alexander's justice and futility of any treachery in trying to gain his favour. The drama builds up and reaches its zenith at night. At dusk the Persians have left their arms and gone to find supplies in the nearby villages. Only the Bactriani stay armed. Darius summons Artabazus and reveals what Patron had told him. This prompts Artabazus to concur with the idea that he should move to the Greek camp for better protection and the rest of

⁴⁷ Curtius 5. 11. 4; cf. Xenophon, *Anabasis* I. VIII. 1.

⁴⁸ Curtius V. XI.

the Persians would also follow, but Darius seems beyond advice. His belief is that he cannot escape his destiny. He embraces Artabazus and in tears bids him good bye, telling him to go away, and veils his own head so as not to see him go and amid lamentations he throws himself on the ground. His body guards also slip away while only a few eunuchs stay with him, but the king dismisses them as well. They burst into wailing, the sound of which fills the camp. Bessus and Nabarzanes are told that the king has killed himself. They race towards him and find that he is living. They seize and bind him and put him in a cart covered with hides. Since he is a king, his fetters are of gold. But his cart is covered so not to be recognized and rescued. His money and equipment are seized like booty. His army has split. Artabazus and some of the forces have left for Parthiene, while others have joined Bessus.

The story then shifts to Alexander who, however, now has reformed into a saviour of Darius only wishing to rescue him. On his way on two instances he receives information on Darius' whereabouts. The second informer a Babylonian by the name of Bagistanes tells him that Darius was not a prisoner yet but in danger of either death or chains. Alexander races without resting even at night. At Darius' former camp he receives information from two men, Orsines and Mithracenes, deserters from Bessus, about a shorter route. With a light-armed troop he follows the route with speed. Finally from a distance the two armies spot each other. Bessus' army is superior in numbers, arms and rested, while Alexander's men are weary. However, the name of Alexander and his fame terrifies them into flight. Bessus and his accomplices go to Darius and urge him to mount a horse and rescue himself from the approaching enemy, but he says that the avenging gods were coming. He asks for Alexander's protection. Bessus inflamed by wrath hurls javelins at him and leaves him wounded. They also injure the beasts and kill two slaves who were with the king. They then disperse. Nabarzanes goes to Hyrcania, Bessus to Bactra with a few men. When some resist Alexander, 3,000 are slain and many others are captured. They search for Darius. The beasts that drew the cart have left the road and stop in a valley near a spring. A thirsty Macedonian soldier accidentally finds him and hears the groans of a dying man.⁴⁹ The text breaks at this point.

⁴⁹ Curtius V. XII–XIII. 25.

It is possible to read into all this the simple fact that during this period the Persian central authority had collapsed⁵⁰ and different centers of power were emerging. Curtius' account testifies to this when he says: "in the camp, which was under no one's command, there were varied impulses, and they no longer took council for the common good, as before",⁵¹ although much of the other detailed content would seem unlikely on the face of it. The Bactrians' loyalty, or lack of, is an example. They seem only to recognize their satrap as their master and give him absolute obedience.⁵² For his protection they are ready to capture the king.⁵³ They seem to be of one mind with him and never question his actions in spite of the obvious faults and his varied show of loyalty and betrayal. At the same time Curtius informs of the almost religious reverence of all the Iranian nations for the king: "For in those nations the majesty of their kings is extraordinary; in response to his mere name the barbarians assemble, and veneration for his former fortune attends him even in adversity."⁵⁴ That is why Bessus needs the king's removal. As long as he lives, Bessus cannot achieve his aim.⁵⁵ One wonders if Curtius is implying that Bactria under Bessus had already openly separated from the Persian rule and viewed itself as a legitimate replacement?

The impious minds of the conspirators were puffed up by the province which they governed, one which in arms and men, as well as in extent of territory is second to none among those nations; it occupies a third part of Asia, and the number of its men of military age equaled the armies which Darius had lost.⁵⁶

Bessus is not declaring war on the Persians but rather is trying to lure them to his side with promises of the riches of his satrapy,⁵⁷ but to no avail. "The reply of all the Persians was about the same, that it was impious for the king to be deserted."⁵⁸ And one recalls the fact that Bessus has already tried the pretext of temporary kingship for gaining his goal, under the guise of only wanting to avert the prevailing misfortune.⁵⁹ In

⁵⁰ Cf. Bosworth, 1988a, p. 95.

⁵¹ Curtius V. IX. 14.

⁵² Curtius V. X. 5.

⁵³ Curtius V. IX. 10.

⁵⁴ Curtius V. X. 2.

⁵⁵ Curtius V. X. 1.

⁵⁶ Curtius V. X. 3.

⁵⁷ Curtius V. IX. 16.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Curtius V. IX. 1–8.

that position the Persian forces would also have found supporting him as their leader imperative. But there is another group to be considered as well that has always shown significant relevance to the outcome of political struggles: the Greek mercenaries. Based on Curtius' account until the end they remain loyal to Darius,⁶⁰ although at one point their loyalty seems to be questioned by Bessus,⁶¹ prior to which a contra-exposition is offered.⁶²

A deterrent against open warfare with the Persians is their number which combined with that of the Greek mercenaries' forces had formed a formidable adversary for Bessus and his Bactrians.⁶³ Yet it is not clear why, despite the presence of such support, Bessus succeeds in his scheme. Perhaps because the story increasingly moves towards drama with a clear line of demarcation between good and evil, that eventually anticipates the heroic entry of Alexander. For that desired outcome, however, much sense and rationale has to be sacrificed, while references from other mediums of expression such as artistic representations are also employed. An example is seen in the scene of Bessus asking for the king's forgiveness, as part of his treacherous design.

At day break Bessus and Nabarzanes with their Bactrian soldiers come to the vestibule of the king's tent in supplication. Darius ascends his chariot and gives the signal for march. The traitors prostrate themselves on the ground in veneration of Darius.⁶⁴ This scene seems to rely on an artistic vocabulary, as if narrating from the scenes of a relief freeze or portions of a painting. In a single scene he draws on two royal emblems: the king's tent⁶⁵ and his chariot,⁶⁶ with the king leading the army in his chariot as the first warrior.⁶⁷ At the same time he notes: 'according to his former custom',⁶⁸ as if already informing of his imminent fall. On the other hand, one may note that despite the presence of iconography of power, and

⁶⁰ Curtius V. VIII. 3, V. XI. 1–12.

⁶¹ Curtius V. XII. 2.

⁶² Curtius V. XI. 5–7.

⁶³ Curtius V. X. 7.

⁶⁴ Curtius V. X. 12–15.

⁶⁵ Cf. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* VIII. 5. 3; Curtius III. 3. 8, III. 11. 23; Briant, p. 188.

⁶⁶ DSp, DSS, see Kent, p. 146; P. Jamzadeh, *The Achaemenid Throne: Its Significance and its Legacy*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1991, pp. 69 f.; *Id.*, "The Apadana stairway reliefs and the metaphor of conquest", *Iranica Antiqua* 27, 1993, pp. 125–147.

⁶⁷ Jamzadeh, 1991, p. 69; cf. D. Stronach, "Early Achaemenid coinage: perspectives from the homeland", *Iranica Antiqua* 24, 1989, pp. 255–279.

⁶⁸ Curtius V. X. 13.

the fact that this scene follows Darius' speech and the encouragements of his men as to the merits of another battle,⁶⁹ Curtius informs of Darius' flight, 'for he feared Alexander alone'.⁷⁰ In other words, the message of the power of the king represented by his chariot and his tent is turned around and put into effect for Alexander. Here, although absent, he is the anticipated master and these are already the insignias of his coming rule. Even Darius himself seems to welcome Alexander's coming and avenging his betrayal.⁷¹

It may be that such outlandish use of dramatic vocabulary is needed in order to out credit the Bactrian claim to Persian rule and at the same time establish Alexander as the righteous heir to Darius, the one who is awaited even by the king. Furthermore, it is possible to see an actual dramatic stage forming the setting for the enactment of the story. The events in Darius' tent, for instance, lack reason altogether but cater to the needs of a dramatic play. The actions of the Persian commander who has to be dragged away crying and wailing,⁷² rather than pulling himself and the resources together and taking charge—when shortly before he is reported of doing just that and managing the situation admirably⁷³—would seem to be more fitting for a tragedy, where the audience would also join in the expressions of emotion, rather than the sober pages of a history book.

Darius' actions are also fit for a similar dramatic setting. In veiling his head he seems to be signing off from life and mourning his own death or submitting to his inevitable doom, when he assumes the position of prostration.⁷⁴ In fact, references to death are explicit: "Then, veiling his head, in order not to see Artabazus going away amid lamentations, as if from his funeral pyre, he threw himself prone upon the ground."⁷⁵

The eunuchs are also already in mourning. The king speaks of suicide but rejects it as against his belief.⁷⁶ The Persian army is also impotent. It has frozen in fear of the Bactrians and dares not take up arms,⁷⁷ although it has not forgotten its duty to protect the king.⁷⁸ However, the entire

⁶⁹ Curtius V. VIII. 6–17, see above for the speech.

⁷⁰ Curtius V. X. 15.

⁷¹ Curtius V. XII. 5.

⁷² Curtius V. XII. 8.

⁷³ Curtius V. IX. 17.

⁷⁴ Curtius V. XII. 8.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Curtius V. XII. 11–12.

⁷⁷ Curtius V. XII. 13.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

camp is in mourning and the news of the wailing reaches Bessus and Nabarzanes as the king's suicide.⁷⁹ They rush in and capture the king,⁸⁰ we may recall in the full sight of thousands of fighting Persians and Greeks.⁸¹ Everyone is afraid of the Bactrians and in awe of the hanging shadow of doom that cannot be escaped.

However, it is stressed that the indignation of pushing Darius from the trappings of power—like the chariot—to the misery of a covered wagon is not the doings of a foreign power, but the culprits were his own slaves.⁸² In other words, the Iranian audience should not blame Alexander for the misfortunes of Darius, but the cowardice and treachery of some of those among its own midst. These very traitors also had looted the king's money and fled.⁸³ Moreover, we learn that in witnessing all this the Persian and Greek armies of the king simply leave for Parthiene in disapproval.⁸⁴ Some of the Persians—but none of the Greeks, however—have also joined the Bactrians.⁸⁵ Darius is bound with gold chains—as a mark of his high rank—although his cart is covered with dirty hides for camouflage.⁸⁶ Seemingly there is fear of his rescue. It is not clear why Bessus, who had been waiting for a chance to end the king's life, now takes him along in such guise. Furthermore, the Bactrian army that had so terrified the Persians, now flees upon learning of Alexander's approach:

For the barbarians were superior both in number and in strength; and besides their fresh soldiers would have entered battle with wearied men. But the name of Alexander and his fame, of especially great import in war, so terrified them that they turned to flight.⁸⁷

That is the climax of the story that has been minutely graded. All comes down to Alexander's greatness. First we are told of the Bactrians' formidable

⁷⁹ Curtius V. XII. 14.

⁸⁰ Curtius V. XII. 15.

⁸¹ Curtius V. X. 7.

⁸² Curtius V. XII. 16.

⁸³ Curtius V. XII. 17; It is significant that Strabo XV. 3. 9 in enumerating the Persian treasuries captured by Alexander, valued at 180,000 talents, adds that the treasures carried along with Darius in flight from Media, was 8,000 talents and were taken as booty by those who slew him. Therefore, based on this report one can see that Darius in his last flight and on his way to organize a last stand in Bactria, takes a fraction of the treasures with him, and not the entire treasury in the advent of the campaigns, as the Alexander Histories had stated (see the chapter I on The Plight of Achaemenid Royal Women).

⁸⁴ Curtius V. XII. 18.

⁸⁵ Curtius V. XII. 19.

⁸⁶ Curtius V. XII. 20.

⁸⁷ Curtius V. XIII. 13–14.

force and then informed that even that fresh strong newly reinforced army had merely melted down in view of Alexander's name and reputation. He is not only powerful but he is also merciful. Darius awaits his rescue and 'protection'.⁸⁸ This incites the wrath in the traitors who wound him and the beasts of burden, killing the two accompanying slaves and then scattering in different directions.⁸⁹ Their army is of course either slain by Alexander's forces or captured,⁹⁰ while Darius' cart wanders off the road and is finally found by a Macedonian near a spring, with Darius groaning of his wounds and near death.⁹¹

No doubt Curtius' lost text would have included messages of farewell to Alexander, praising his valour and accepting his sovereignty. Thus Persian kingship would have been reborn in Alexander with the old king vouching for his legitimacy, and the metaphor of water acting as a validating factor.

Although the accounts of Darius III in *Alexander Histories* seem to be heavily affected by propaganda, with the primary aim of establishing Alexander as his legitimate successor, yet they also include much sensational eulogistic expressions of sympathy for Darius himself.

Despite his shortcomings, especially in comparison with the shining light of Alexander,⁹² his eventual downfall is mainly attributed to the treachery of certain of his followers. Darius' relatively short reign of six years (336–330 BC) is almost entirely spent on dealing with the Macedonian threat and Alexander's invasion. And one gets the sense that he is deprived of a courageous last stand, which he had been preparing for, only because of the unanticipated disloyalty of an important faction of his force. The people that he had come to count on for serious support suddenly let him down.

In following the *Alexander Histories*, one can glean the fact that Darius had planned to draw Alexander into the eastern satrapies and perhaps into the Bactrians' trap, counting on their cavalry's maneuvers from a position of strength and familiarity with the terrain. Justin's information on Darius' preferred strategy of letting the enemy advance beyond the frontiers and then drive him out⁹³ may in fact be a reflection on such

⁸⁸ Curtius V. XIII. 16; See above on the meaning of *Alexander*, 'protector of men'; cf. E. Badian, "Darius III", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 100, 2000, p. 241.

⁸⁹ Curtius V. XIII. 16–18.

⁹⁰ Curtius V. XIII. 18–22.

⁹¹ Curtius V. XIII. 23–25.

⁹² Cf. Badian, 2000, pp. 241–268.

⁹³ Justin XI. VI.

deliberate planning. This considerable reliance on the Bactrian forces may have foreshadowed Bessus' own strategy in anticipating a chance for gaining the kingship. As an Achaemenid,⁹⁴ he would have considered himself as viable for replacing Darius. In Curtius' account, Darius does as a matter of fact accuse him of having harboured ill-intent for a long time, awaiting an opportune moment.⁹⁵

On the other hand, it is obvious that folklore and drama also play substantial roles in the accounts of Darius III. Interestingly his account in the *Shāhnāma* is also influenced by folklore, moreover, a folklore that reaches back to the times before the Achaemenids and to that of the Elamites.⁹⁶ The last independent Elamite king, Tempt-Humban-Inshushinak (668–653 BC), the Te-Umman of the Assyrian records, loses his kingdom to the invading army of Ashur-banipal and in his last hours suffers the treason of some of his close followers, very much like Darius III. It has been argued elsewhere that a local nationalistic folkloric memory on the demise of the last independent Elamite king had been transferred to the accounts of Darius who had had a similar status—the last independent king—in the eyes of the population of the same area, namely the Elamite–Persian territories that had witnessed the peaceful co-existence of the two peoples—Elamites and Persians—for centuries and the cross-fertilization of their cultures.⁹⁷ It was argued that the medium of minstrel poetry had functioned as the transmitting vehicle, reflecting on certain information that had been received through the filter of poets at the service of powerful kings, such as Ashur-banipal, echoes from whose bas-reliefs are also seen in this folkloric story.⁹⁸ It may be that the accounts surviving in the Alexander Histories had also been nourished by the same pool of folklore.

With regard to folkloric motifs from ancient times influencing Darius' accounts, one may perhaps also note the poetry of Stesichorus, the 7th century BC Greek poet,⁹⁹ who envisions sun's journey at night as:

Now the Sun, begotten of Hyperion, was descending into his golden cup,
that he might traverse Oceanus and come to the depths of dark and awful

⁹⁴ Arrian III. 21. 4–5, 30. 4.

⁹⁵ Curtius V. IX. 9.

⁹⁶ P. Jamzadeh, "An Assyrian motif in the *Shāhnāma*", *Iranica Antiqua* 38, 2003, pp. 167–172.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ A. Lesky, *A History of Greek Literature*, 1966, New York, p. 152.

night, even to his *mother and wedded wife and beloved children*. Meanwhile he, the son of Zeus, strode into the grove o'ershadowed with bay-trees.¹⁰⁰ (my emphasis)

In the chapter on 'The Plight of the Achaemenid Royal Women' the implicit question was raised: how have we come to place so much emphasis by the sources on the capture of Darius' mother, wife and children? Was it because in the scheme of Alexander's propaganda they each had a role to play? Or we are witnessing the reflections of the survival of an ancient motif? In that case perhaps the propaganda had originally been an eulogistic vision of Darius compared to the ancient motif of the sun travelling at night—perhaps as the captive king in the covered wagon, with a latter revision transferring that eulogy and turning the story around to Alexander's benefit? At this stage this can only remain a hypothetical question (see also below, on Alexander's family. Ch. XII).

There are other texts in other contexts that are also more sympathetic to Darius and the Persians that may be relevant at this point to mention. An example is the Akkadian text known as the Dynastic prophecy. Column III of this much damaged tablet is said to refer to the reign of Darius III. Moreover, it portrays the Persians as the final victors over the invaders. According to this document, the Persian king is first defeated in battle. But after reorganizing his army and with the help of the Babylonian gods, he is finally triumphant.¹⁰¹

It is noteworthy that this wishful interpretation of history—if not in fact revealing the existence of a different version of the events—would seem to reflect the sentiments expressed in the *Shāhnāma* story that relates Alexander's failure in finding a resting place among the royal Achaemenid tombs at Naqsh-e Rostam.¹⁰² It was previously argued that the *Shāhnāma* story had reflected a prevailing popular projection among the Persians of the Achaemenids as the final victors.¹⁰³ It may be that here with the Dynastic Prophecy too we are seeing a similar example but in a Babylonian context.

¹⁰⁰ Athenaeus XI. 469 e–f.

¹⁰¹ A.K. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, Toronto, 1975, pp. 17 f., 24 f., 35; Briant, pp. 863 f., 876.

¹⁰² See below; P. Jamzadeh, "Remnants of the legacy of the Achaemenids in the *Shāhnāma* of Firdawsi", *Proceedings of the Second European Conference of Iranian Studies*, eds. B.G. Fragner *et al.*, Rome, 1995, pp. 317–323.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

Another interesting sympathetic piece is a Greek Sibylline Prophecy from western Anatolia that also informs of the eventual destruction of the Macedonians by Persians.¹⁰⁴ At the end it includes the soothing expression of the prevalence of justice as: 'those whose race he wished to destroy, by them will his own race be destroyed'.¹⁰⁵ It is believed it to be an originally Persian Sibylline oracle that survives in Greek and refers to Alexander's invasion of Asia as that of a faithless savage man who is a stranger to justice putting Asia under an evil yoke and flooding the earth in blood.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ S.K. Eddy, *The King is Dead, Studies in the Near Eastern Resistance to Hellenism 334–31 BC*, Lincoln, 1961, pp. 11–12; M. Boyce & F. Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. III, *Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule*, Leiden, 1991, p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ Boyce, p. 13.

¹⁰⁶ Eddy, pp. 11–12.

CHAPTER FIVE

BESSUS' FATE

Bessus' final fate, as reported by the Alexander Histories, also reveals the interaction of folkloric motifs with historic facts. In certain parts close similarities with reports on Darius, as well as counter-poses, is evident. While altogether these reports show a singular strand of direction, they culminate in glorifying Alexander.

Bessus' very end and the punishment meted out by Alexander is reported variously by the sources, some drawing on comparisons with the fate of rebels in the beginning of Darius I's rule and his restoration of stability and Achaemenid rule. The story of Bessus' capture interestingly approximates that of Darius III, his Iranian predecessor. They both suffer from the treason of their close associates.

One may note that there are other rebellions that Alexander needs to put down, but none is treated in the sources with such significance. The reason is of course Bessus' claim to Achaemenid kingship. As Arrian reports:

Certain Persians met Alexander, reporting that Bessus was wearing his cap royal fashion and clothing himself in Persian royal garb, called himself Artaxerxes instead of Bessus, and gave out that he was king of Asia. He had about him, they said, those Persians who had fled safe to Bactria and a good number of the Bactrians themselves; and he expected that Scythian allies would also join him.¹

It would seem that he is following Darius' strategy and the plan that he had relied on for his final encounter with Alexander. But instead of putting the Bactrian force and their formidable strength² at the service of the king and using the advantage of the Bactrian country side for the king's victory, he seizes the opportunity for his own assumption of power.³

¹ Arrian III. 25. 3; on the significance of throne names, see R. Schmitt, "Achaemenid Throne-names" *Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli* 42, 1982, pp. 83–95.

² Curtius IV. XIII. 5.

³ Cf. Diodorus XVII. 74. 2: "he pointed out that the nature of their country would assist them very much, since the region was hard for an army to penetrate and furnished enough men for them to establish their independence. He proclaimed that he would take personal command of the war and designated himself king, with the approval of the people. Then

Alexander on his march against Bessus encounters rebellions and armed oppositions, some as part of and precursors to Bessus' rebellion, narrated with heroic overtones.⁴ Of special significance is the hand-to-hand duel of an Iranian general with one of Alexander's generals,⁵ bringing to mind the story of Darius' combat with a Cadusian chieftain when serving in the army of Artaxerxes III.⁶ This finds an added importance in view of the fact that Bessus has assumed the throne-name of Artaxerxes. The story here would seem to function as a propaganda tool for Bessus, elevating him *contra* Darius and putting him on equal footing with Darius' former overlord, the Achaemenid king Artaxerxes III (Ochus). The story ascribed to Darius is now related for one of his underlings, Satibarzanes,⁷ although the outcome of the combat is in favour of Alexander's general, Erigyus.⁸ Therefore, in the end the story seizes on the established gradation and turns its purport and the final effect to Alexander's benefit. This single combat decides the fate of the battle and the Iranian tribesmen either flee⁹ or surrender.¹⁰ Further on amid the skirmishes and flights we are informed of another deed of Bessus that seems to echo an act of Darius, only in reverse, displaying his dark character in comparison with Darius' humanism, again all taking place under Alexander's overwhelming bravery and powerful ascent.

In fleeing from Alexander's approaching army Bessus crosses the river Oxus and burns the boats on which he had crossed.¹¹ This act may be compared with Darius' action after the defeat at Arbela and his flight. He crosses the river Lycus and refuses to burn the bridge behind him, saying that he preferred to give a passage to his pursuers rather than take one away from those who were in flight.¹²

he set to work enrolling soldiers, manufacturing an adequate stock of weapons, and busily making everything ready for the approaching time of need"; Curtius VI. 6. 13: "For Bessus, having assumed royal attire, had given orders that he should be called Artaxerxes, and was assembling the Scythians and the rest of the peoples dwelling by the Tanais."

⁴ Arrian III. 25. 5–7, 28. 2–3; Diodorus XVII. 81. 3, 83. 4 f.; Curtius VII. 3. 2, 4. 33–40.

⁵ Arrian III. 28. 3; Diodorus XVII. 83. 5–6; Curtius VII. IV. 33–38.

⁶ Diodorus XVII. 6. 1–2; Justin X; cf. Briant, pp. 229–230.

⁷ Arrian III. 25. 5; Diodorus XVII. 83. 5; Curtius VII. IV. 33.

⁸ Curtius VII. 4. 37; Arrian III. 28. 3; Diodorus XVII. 83. 6.

⁹ Arrian III. 28. 3.

¹⁰ Curtius VII. 4. 38; Diodorus XVII. 83. 6.

¹¹ Arrian III. 28. 9.

¹² Curtius IV. XVI. 8–9; Justin XI. XIV.

Following this crossing Bessus seems to lose the support of the Bactrians, but he has others with him.¹³ Alexander easily takes the greatest cities of Bactria and establishes garrisons there and a Persian satrap, Artabazus.¹⁴ Interestingly at this crucial moment there is no news of the Bactrian cavalry who had returned home, following Bessus' flight.

Shortly after the first stages of Bessus' dramatic end gradually unfolds which bear similarities to the final fate of Darius, as well as that of the last independent Elamite king, noted before. According to the accounts in *Alexander Histories* Bessus also suffers from the treason of his associates¹⁵ who take on his mantle and that of his former accomplices in Darius' drama.¹⁶

Of interest is Alexander's response to this news which is opposite to his reaction towards the news of Darius' capture. Now he relaxes his pursuit,¹⁷ whereas then he had speeded up in order to rescue Darius.¹⁸ Seemingly the fate of the two Persian kings is compared and a judgement is passed, by the supreme lord in their dramas. Alexander sends Ptolemaeus with a substantial force in order to aid the capture of Bessus and provide support to those who were ready to betray him, saying they had him under arrest.¹⁹ Ptolemaeus moves rapidly, but only to learn that Spitamenes and Dataphernes, the traitors, had not quite made up their minds about the surrender of Bessus.²⁰ What follows as narrated by Arrian shows other similarities with the fate of Darius, in that the betrayers have left the scene and only arranged for the capture of the victim, while suffering from the pangs of conscience at the same time.²¹

Ptolemaeus following Bessus' capture in a walled village sends messengers to Alexander asking in what way he should bring Bessus into his presence. He is told that Bessus should be brought bound, naked and

¹³ Arrian III. 28. 9–10: "but himself moved off towards Nautaka of the country of Sogdiana. There went with him the troops of Spitamenes and Oxyartes, and with them the horsemen from Sogdiana, and Dahae from the Tanais. But the Bactrian cavalry when they learnt that Bessus had determined on flight went off, each party their own way to their homes."

¹⁴ Arrian III. 29. 1.

¹⁵ Arrian III. 29. 6 f.; Curtius VII. V. 19 f.

¹⁶ Arrian III. 21. 1–10; Curtius V. 12. 19 f., see above.

¹⁷ Arrian III. 29. 7.

¹⁸ Arrian III. 21. 2.

¹⁹ Arrian III. 29. 6–7.

²⁰ Arrian III. 29. 7–30. 1.

²¹ Arrian III. 30. 2–3.

wearing a wooden collar and held at the right side of the road by which Alexander's army was to pass.²²

And so Ptolemaeus did. But Alexander on seeing Bessus stopped his car and asked him why he had first seized Darius, who had been his king, his relative, and his benefactor, then led him about in chains, and then murdered him? Bessus replied that he had done this not by any private decision of his own but in union with all the attendants of Darius at that time, that they might themselves win safe conduct from Alexander. But Alexander at this bade them scourge him and the herald to proclaim during the scourging these same reproaches he had directed to Bessus in his enquiry. Bessus then after this torture was sent to Bactra to be put to death. This is Ptolemaeus' account of Bessus; Aristobulus, however, affirms that it was the followers of Spitamenes and Dataphernes who led Bessus naked and bound, wearing a wooden collar, and so handed him over to Alexander.²³

Further on:

Then Alexander summoned a conference of those with him and brought out Bessus before them, and accusing Bessus of treachery towards Darius, and commanded that his nose and tips of the ears should be cut off, and that he should be carried to Ecbatana, there to be put to death in the full gathering of Medes and Persians.²⁴

Arrian follows his narration with a judgement:

This over-punishing of Bessus I cannot approve; I regard as barbaric the mutilation of the extremities, and I agree that Alexander was carried away to the extent both of copying Medic and Persian splendour, and also the fashion of barbaric kings to treat their subjects as lower creatures.²⁵

What he is referring to seems to have an echo of Darius I's special punishment for a Median rebel, which in his cases, however, is more severe.²⁶ Like him Bessus is also to suffer his final indignity at Ecbatana. But while he had challenged Darius I to Median kingship, the significance of Ecbatana

²² Arrian III. 30. 3–4.

²³ Arrian III. 30. 3–5.

²⁴ Arrian IV. 7. 3.

²⁵ Arrian IV. 7. 4.

²⁶ R.G. Kent, *Old Persian, Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*, New Haven, 1953, pp. 123–124, DB II. 73–78: "I cut off his nose and ears and tongue, and put out one eye; he was kept bound at my palace entrance, all the people saw him. Afterwards I impaled him at Ecbatana"; Cf. DB II. 88–91.

for Bessus is questionable.²⁷ He was a Persian and an Achaemenid,²⁸ and appointed satrap of Bactria.²⁹ He has no obvious connections to Media, unless one would see a conflation with the accounts of Darius I and especially his manner of putting down rebellions. Of special interest is the phrase: "in the full gathering of Medes and Persians",³⁰ which seems to be referring to the meaning of Ecbatana, O.P. *Hagmatāna*, 'gathering place', 'city of gatherings'.³¹ And again would have applied more to Darius I's time when the Medes and Persians had formed the leading nations of the empire. In Alexander's time and in Bessus' case this location does not seem to have much relevance.

Arrian relates this information and his judgement in the same breath as on Alexander's taking up Median costume (in fact Persian), which as will be seen all reflect a specific cultural/political significance that also relies on translations from Persian that were not quite comprehended by the later Greek and Latin authors.

In Curtius' account while the report on Bessus' punishment³² is similar to that in Arrian, yet the story of his betrayal and capture differs. And it does not fail to include overt praises of Alexander and his fortune in contrast to the Iranians' absence of wisdom, loyalty and fortune.

Spitamenes, a close friend of Bessus decides to betray him. His motive is not clear, avenging Darius and hating Bessus' fortune are mentioned.³³ But his decision shows a clear relation to Alexander's crossing the river Oxus, which seems to have informed of the imminent fall of Bessus.

For when he learned that Alexander had crossed the river Oxus, he enrolled Dataphernes and Catanes, in whom Bessus had the greatest confidence, as accomplices in the conspiracy which he had planned. They consented more promptly than they were asked, and taking with them eight very strong men, they laid the following snare. Spitamenes went to Bessus and in a private conference said that he had learned that Dataphernes and Catanes were

²⁷ Curtius VII. V. 43 refers to Bessus' place of execution as the spot where he had killed Darius. But according to the sources, including Curtius, Darius was on his way to Bactria when he was seized see Curtius V. XIII. 6; Diodorus XVII. 73. 2; Arrian III. 20. 2 places it after the Caspian gates; Justin XI. 15 calls it Thara, a village of the Parthians. Of interest may also be Arrian VI. 29. 3 on another Median pretender, Baryaxes and the possibility of a mixture between the two rebels. Cf. Bosworth, 1988a, p. 236 who treats Baryaxes separately.

²⁸ Arrian III. 21. 5, 30. 4.

²⁹ Arrian III. 8. 3, 21. 1; Curtius V. 8. 5, V. 9. 8; Diodorus XVII. 73. 4.

³⁰ Arrian IV. 7. 3.

³¹ Cf. Kent, p. 212.

³² Curtius VII. V. 40 f., X. 10.

³³ Curtius VII. V. 20.

plotting against him, in order to deliver him alive to Alexander; that he had anticipated their conspiracy and was holding them in fetters.

Bessus, under obligation for this great service, as he thought it, both thanked them and, eager to inflict punishment, ordered the two men to be brought to him. They, with their arms voluntarily bound, were dragged in by the accomplices in the plot; Bessus, gazing fiercely at them, arose, evidently unable to refrain from laying hands upon them. Then they, laying aside pretence, surrounded him, and in spite of his vain attempts at resistance bound him, tearing from his head the royal tiara and rending the clothes which he had put on from the spoils of the murdered king. Bessus, confessing that the gods had come as avengers of his crime, added that they had not been unfavourable to Darius, whom they thus avenged, but propitious to Alexander, since even his enemies always aided his victory.³⁴

Curtius then refers to the popularity of Bessus among the people, right after the just noted qualifications of Alexander as the righteous king who enjoyed divine support.

Whether the populace would have rescued Bessus is uncertain, had not those who had bound him, by falsely saying that they had done so by order of Alexander, terrified them while their minds were still wavering. The conspirators placed him on a horse and took him to be delivered to Alexander.³⁵

Further on in the text Curtius resumes Bessus' story, in terms that directly co-relate to Darius' last hour:

Then Alexander advanced to the river Tanais. Thither Bessus was brought, not only bound, but stripped of all his clothing. Spitamenes held him with a chain placed about his neck, a sight as pleasing to the barbarians as to the Macedonians. Then Spitamenes said: "*Avenging both you and Darius, my kings*, I have brought you the slayer of his lord, captured in the manner of which he himself set the example. Would that Darius might open his eyes to behold the spectacle. Would that he might rise from the lower world, since he did not deserve such a fate and merits this consolation." Alexander, after having highly praised Spitamenes, turned to Bessus and said: "of what wild beast did the frenzy enter your mind when you had the heart, first to bind, and then to kill the king who was your greatest benefactor? But the reward for this parricide you have paid yourself by the false name of king." Bessus, not daring to deny his crime, said that he had used the title of king in order

³⁴ Curtius VII. V. 21–25.

³⁵ Curtius VII. V. 26.

that he might be able to hand over his nation to him; for if he had delayed, another would have seized the rule.³⁶ (my emphasis)

Alexander delivers Bessus to Darius' brother, Oxathres, to be bound to a cross, after his ears and nose had been cut off, in order to have his body pierced by arrows.³⁷ However, his execution is postponed "in order that he might be slain in that very place where he had killed Darius".³⁸ Further on we learn that Bessus was to be taken to Ecbatana to expiate with his life his murder of Darius.³⁹ However, the relevance of Ecbatana is not clear, as was noted before.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, it is significant that Curtius needs to qualify it with a justification, adding weight to its artificiality and probable conflation.

Curtius' expanded account includes a note on not exposing Bessus' body on the cross to birds' attacks and praises for the bowmanship of a man in keeping the birds off.⁴¹ The relevance of this piece and its associations is enigmatic.

One may conclude that the general effect of the accounts on Bessus and Alexander's treatment of him is to provide legitimacy for Alexander in the eyes of the Iranians.⁴² While from the same accounts one gains the insight that his threat had been a serious one, needing a substantial propaganda effort to counter it, including the idea of Darius having designated Alexander as his successor on his death bed and advising him to avenge his death. Such efforts would have been necessary in encountering an Achaemenid's claim to kingship, as Bessus was.⁴³

Furthermore, an Aelian account survives that informs of hardships suffered by Alexander and his army on their way to capture Bessus: "When Alexander was pursuing Bessus, he became short of food, and both he and his men ate camels and pack animals. As their stock of wood gave out they ate the meat raw. They were helped by having plenty of silphium to tender the meat.

³⁶ Curtius VII. V. 36–39.

³⁷ Curtius VII. V. 40.

³⁸ Curtius VII. V. 43.

³⁹ Curtius VII. X. 10.

⁴⁰ See above and n. 27.

⁴¹ Curtius VII. V. 40–43.

⁴² Cf. Bosworth, 1988a, p. 100.

⁴³ Cf. Nylander, 1993, n. 78; E. Badian, "Alexander in Iran", *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 2, *The Median and Achaemenian Periods* ed. I. Gershevitch, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 435–456; Bosworth, 1988a, p. 108.

In Bactria the soldiers at once identified the villages because they saw smoke as a sign of habitation, and they cleared the snow away from the doors.⁴⁴ This account would seem to originate from a context that did not view Alexander's advances against Bessus so altogether righteous and blessed by his good fortune. In fact, according to this account he and his army had endured considerable misfortune and hardship, as well as lack of support from the locals, in their pursuit of this Achaemenid pretender.

⁴⁴ Aelian, *Historical Miscellany*, 12. 37, Trans, Wilson, N.G. (Loeb) 1997, pp. 381–383.

CHAPTER SIX

ALEXANDER'S PERSIAN ATTIRE

A noteworthy aspect of Alexander's Iranization measures is his adoption of certain articles of Persian clothing that reveals his understanding of their symbolic importance. The extant sources themselves are not so straight-forward and clear in their reports and one may only ascertain the facts by extractions. Their difficulty seems to be with understanding the cultural nuances behind Alexander's measures, which either goes back to the original Greek sources and reflects their personal disapprovals, or has been lost in the translations and secondary compilations.

Alexander's need for the trappings of Persian kingship may have become increasingly inevitable, especially in light of Bessus' claim and considerable threat. An echo of this competition survives in the sources and one can see that the two claimants to Darius' throne had closely competed with each other for taking up his mantle. The victor in the end depriving the loser of the very basics of the symbolic facade, exposing him in his shameful treachery in the public's eyes.¹ Bearing in mind that in Iranian and Eastern cultures nudity would have been regarded as shameful. Therefore, it is with that audience's judgement in mind that the measures are staged. This act would have weighted on the Iranian public's understanding of the symbolic significances attached to the articles of clothing.

Adopting certain articles of the Iranian costume would have signified specific messages. Some served as insignias of kingship, while others had religious imports as well. Bessus is reported to have worn his hat royal fashion and clothed himself in Persian royal garb, thus indicating his claim to kingship,² while Alexander is said to have adopted the Persian diadem, the white robe, the Persian sash and everything else except the trousers and the long-sleeved upper garment.³

Previously it was noted that the juxtaposing of the Persian sash/girdle with the trousers probably goes back to the role of the sash on the Persian costume that had served to tie up the skirt for practicality of movement,

¹ Arrian III. 30. 3.

² Arrian III. 25. 3.

³ Diodorus XVII. 77. 5.

especially during combat,⁴ and as such it had imparted a specific meaning to the girdle. That meaning survives in the Persian language with a vast scope of connotations denoting readiness for combat, for undertaking important ventures, for entering the service of an overlord and other similar notions.⁵

In archaeological remains this form of girding up the skirt survives on Achaemenid seals,⁶ and in post-Achaemenid period on the sculptural remains of the Commagenian kings at Nimrud-Dagh who had prided themselves with their Achaemenid and Greek heritages.⁷

In Achaemenid inscriptions one also encounters the idea in the word *bandakā*, 'subject' (OP **banda* 'bond')⁸ referred by Darius I to the countries under his rule⁹ and then to his army commanders sent to put down rebellions in various countries.¹⁰ It is believed that the translation of this word in Greek had rendered *doulos* 'slave' which the Greeks for whom society had been polarized between the citizens and slaves, had found it so offensive.¹¹

The problems Alexander encounters¹² may also have been due to the same misunderstandings. What Curtius reports about the reasons stated for an assassination attempt against Alexander by some of his Macedonians, is especially noteworthy: We plotted to kill you because you have begun to act not as a king with his free-born subjects but as a master with his slaves.¹³ And further on: you delivered us to the barbarians and

⁴ P. Jamzadeh, "The function of girdle on Achaemenid costume in combat", *Iranica Antiqua* XXII, 1987, pp. 267 f.; *Id.*, "Achaemenid girding in Zoroastrian and Iranian contexts", *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute* 62, 1998, pp. 1 f.

⁵ See the Persian dictionaries such as the *Loghat Nameh-i Dihkhodā*, *Farhang-i Moein*, *Farhang-i Anendrāj*, *Borhān-i Qāteh* and others under '*kamar-band*', 'girdle', and its different configurations.

⁶ E.F. Schmidt, *Persepolis II*, Chicago, 1957, p. 7, seal numbers 3–6, 8, 9, 37, 39; P. Amiet, *Glyptique Susienne* Vol. 43, Paris, 1972, seal numbers 2204, 2206, 2207, 2210; B. Teissier, *Ancient Near Eastern Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, University of California Press, 1984, seal numbers 290–294; E. Porada, *Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in North American Collections, the Collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, Washington, 1948, seal numbers 819, 820E, 821, 823, 824E, 826, 829, 830, 833; Jamzadeh, 1987 & 1998.

⁷ M. Boyce & F. Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. III, Leiden, 1991, pp. 309 f., 316 f.

⁸ Kent, p. 199; W. Eilers, "Banda, i. The term", *Encyclopaedia Iranica* III: 2, 1989, pp. 682 f.

⁹ DB I. 19, Kent, pp. 117–119.

¹⁰ DB II. 20 f., Kent, pp. 121 f.

¹¹ S. Hornblower, "Persia", *The Cambridge Ancient History* VI, eds. D.M. Lewis *et al.*, 1994, p. 54.

¹² Curtius VI. VI. 4, VIII. VII. 1 f., 11 f.; Arrian IV. 7. 4; Justin XII. 3.

¹³ Curtius VIII. VII. 1.

(a novel twist!) sent the victors under the yoke! But you revel in Persian clothes and Persian etiquette; you abhor the customs of your own country. Thus it was a king of the Persians, not of the Macedonians, we wanted to kill and, in accordance with the conventions of war, we pursue you as a deserter. You wanted Macedonians to kneel before you and worship you as a god.¹⁴ Elsewhere, Curtius reports that Alexander had wanted to gradually “accustom them to servile duties and to *treat them like captives*”¹⁵ (my emphasis). Further on Curtius states:

in the whole camp the feeling and the talk of all was the same, namely, that more had been lost by victory than had been gained by war; that it was then above all that they themselves were conquered men, when they had surrendered themselves to alien and foreign habits. With what face, pray, would they return to their homes, as if in the *attire of prisoners*. The king was already ashamed of them since resembling the vanquished rather than the victors, he had changed from a ruler of Macedonia to a *satrap of Darius*.¹⁶ (my emphasis)

These comments show direct references to misunderstood translations of the term *bandakā*, with a play on the concept of ‘bond’, or ‘tied’ in relation to the obligations and duties due to an overlord, as in a pact or contract. The sculptural representations at Commagene showing the king shaking hands with gods, while his costume is represented with the cord lifting it, depicts the concept clearly.¹⁷ This idea bears resemblance to the Zoroastrian girdle, making man a *banda* ‘servant’ of god, undertaking duties and discipline,¹⁸ as well as the Biblical girding of the loins.¹⁹

It is interesting that Alexander in defending his measures refers to the humble origins of the Macedonians and their skin clothing and credits himself and his father Philip with civilizing them.²⁰ His treatment of Bessus, as noted before, draws heavily on the significance of the girdle/loin cloth. Bessus is accused of treason against his overlord and is exposed naked, deprived even of his loin cloth/girdle and a mark of his contractual

¹⁴ Curtius VIII. VII. 12–13.

¹⁵ Curtius VI. VI. 3.

¹⁶ Curtius VI. VI. 9.

¹⁷ H. Waldmann, *Die Kommagenischen Kulturreformen unter König Mithradates I, Kallinikos und seinem sohn Antiochos I*, Leiden, 1973, Tafel XXII. 3.

¹⁸ *Dādīstān-i Dīnik* XXXIX. 18, E.W. West, *Pahlavi Texts II; Iranian Bundahishn* XXXIV. 27–31, B.T. Anklesaria, *Zand-Akasiḥ*, Bombay, 1956, pp. 290 f.; *Indian Bundahishn* XXX. 29–31, West, *Pahlavi Texts I*, 1880, pp. 128 f.; Jamzadeh, 1998, pp. 5 f.

¹⁹ 2 Kings 1. 8; Matthew 3. 4; Mark 1. 4–6; Isaiah 11. 5, 45. 1; Psalms 18. 32, 30. 11; Job 12. 18; Exodus XII. 11.

²⁰ Arrian VII. 9; cf. Curtius X. II. 23.

sanction.²¹ It is significant that the idea is clear to Alexander and that he had come to appreciate a good understanding of the Iranian concept, while the later writers had had difficulties with its comprehension. One wonders if they were faced with translations from Old Persian? And had to work on the basis of a misunderstood composition?

Peucestes, Alexander's satrap of Persia, also adopts the Persian costume and besides this measure learns the language and in all respects assimilates himself to the Persian ways.²² According to Diodorus, he alone is permitted of the Macedonians by Alexander to "wear the Persian raiment, wishing to please the Persians and believing that through Peucestes he could keep the nation in all respects obedient".²³

Plutarch also refers to Alexander's adoption of the

barbaric dress, either from a desire to adapt himself to the native customs, believing that community of race and custom goes far towards softening the hearts of men; or else this was an attempt to introduce the obeisance among the Macedonians, by accustoming them little by little to put up with changes and alterations in his mode of life.²⁴

While his description of the costume reveals a distant understanding of the significance of the mode:

However, he did not adopt the famous Median fashion of dress, which was altogether barbaric and strange, nor did he assume trousers, or sleeved vest, or tiara, but carefully devised a fashion which was midway between the Persian and the Median, more modest than the one and more stately than the other. At first he wore this only in intercourse with the Barbarians and with his companions at home, then people generally saw him riding forth or giving audience in this attire. The sight was offensive to the Macedonians, but they admired his other high qualities...²⁵

Plutarch in his *Moralia* gives a somewhat different account:

Alexander did not favour the Median raiment, but preferred the Persian, for it was much more simple than the Median. Since he deprecated the unusual and theatrical varieties of foreign adornment, such as the tiara and the full-sleeved jacket and trousers, he wore a composite dress adapted from both Persian and Macedonian fashion, as Eratosthenes has recorded. As a philosopher what he wore was a matter of indifference, but as sovereign of

²¹ Arrian III. 30. 3; Jamzadeh, 1998, p. 11.

²² Arrian VI. 30. 2, VII. 6. 3.

²³ Diodorus XIX. 14. 4–5.

²⁴ Plutarch, *Alexander* XLV. 1.

²⁵ *Id.* XLV. 2–3.

both nations and benevolent king he strove to acquire the goodwill of the conquered by showing respect for their apparel, so that they might continue constant in loving the Macedonians as rulers, and might not feel hate toward them as enemies.²⁶

Plutarch continues with a comparison with the tricks hunters employ in their dealings with different animals through their costumes and concludes with a positive judgement: "Must they not rather wonder at his wisdom, since by but a slight alteration of his apparel he made himself the popular leader of all Asia, conquering their bodies by his arms, but winning over their souls by his apparel?"²⁷

Further on Plutarch's *Moralia* in its justifications of Alexander's policy seems to show influences from Darius I's rhetoric and his understanding of rulership vis-a-vis the subject nations. "Alexander desired to render all upon earth subject to one law of reason and one form of government and to reveal all men as one people, and to this purpose he made himself conform."²⁸ One may recall Darius I's statement that when Ahuramazda had seen the earth in commotion he had bestowed it to Darius to put it down in its place,²⁹ or that his law held them firm.³⁰ Furthermore, in his Behistun inscription Darius I refers to the countries under his rule as a plural collective *bandakā* 'subject'.³¹

Therefore, it may perhaps be a valid presumption to state that Alexander's adoption of the Persian costume is in line with his posturing as a Persian king, the ideology and rhetoric of which had been set down by Darius I. And perhaps Plutarch shows some cynicism when he has Alexander admonish his friends' newly acquired habits of luxury and say: "The end and object of conquest is to avoid doing the same thing as the conquered",³² while Curtius reports the reason for the assassination attempt on Alexander's life as an attempt on a king of the Persians' life.³³

Furthermore, it is significant that Arrian in summing up Alexander's deeds remarks: "I feel that the adoption of Persian equipage was a device, both towards the Persians, so that their king might not appear wholly

²⁶ Plutarch, *Moralia* 330 A, trans. F.C. Babbitt, Vol. 4, Cambridge, 1927, pp. 401–403.

²⁷ Plutarch, *Moralia* 330 C.

²⁸ *Id.* 330 D.

²⁹ DNa 31–37, Kent, pp. 137–138.

³⁰ DNa 21, Kent, pp. 137–138.

³¹ DB I. 15–20, Kent, pp. 117–119.

³² Plutarch, *Alexander* XL. 3.

³³ Curtius VIII. VII. 12; the concise statement in Athenaeus 535 f. is precisely to the point: "Alexander as soon as he became master of Asia, began to wear the Persian dress."

removed from them, and towards the Macedonians, to mark some reversion from Macedonian abruptness and arrogance.”³⁴ One may perhaps note the associations of articles of clothing and expectations of behavioral modifications. This would reveal the comprehension of the religious import of the girdle, by certain of the sources and at some stage of the transmission. This understanding would approximate the purport of the Zoroastrian girdle, in that it requires obedience and discipline and denotes man as ‘servant of god’.³⁵ In that case this adoption would have had ramifications beyond a simple change in outward appearances. Perhaps it had entailed certain religious observations as well. Although one cannot over-stretch the evidence, yet one cannot ignore it either.

³⁴ Arrian VII. 29. 4.

³⁵ See n. 19.

CHAPTER SEVEN

REFLECTIONS FROM DARIUS I'S RHETORIC

There are few instances in the histories that show a more or less clear track from the propaganda of Darius I (522–486 BC), the founder of the second branch of the Achaemenid dynasty, influencing the propaganda of Alexander. The intent behind such borrowings from the two-century-old material would have been recourse to their prestigious import, resident among the Iranians, as a means of establishing Alexander as the legitimate king to the Achaemenid throne, especially at a time when there were other contenders, with perhaps more credible claim, in the scene and vying for the same power. Although an instance cited here is from the earlier period in Alexander's campaigns and when he was still engaged with confronting Darius himself.

However, in certain cases the outcome of this resort to the prestigious old rhetoric is negative for Alexander. Instead of according him legality and succeeding to portray him as the rightful king on account of the Iranians' own criteria, the way the material is handled it turns the import of its core message in reverse. As a consequence the effort results in an averse outcome. Perhaps signifying a negative design at work, rather than a clerical mistake at some level. It is more probable that there was a meddling hand involved, handling the material according to a specific agenda. The designer would have been someone versed in the Achaemenid inscriptions, which were still deemed venerable among a certain notable populace and were accessible to some such as members of the empire's chancellery, scribes, clergy and others, some of whom may not have viewed Alexander's accession in a positive light, despite his efforts towards gaining their approval.

1. *Alexander as a Mock-Divinity*

An example of an echo from the inscriptions of Darius I was noted in relation to the letters and envoys exchanged between Darius and Alexander, sometime (c. 331 BC) after the defeat at Issus and mainly focused on Darius' requests and offers for the release of his captured family. It was stated that a response from Alexander seems to include an inverted borrowing from

a text of Darius I. As a result Alexander, instead of shining in the assumed blessed light as the rightful king to fill Darius I's mold, is revealed as someone too hubristic for that revered post.

In his response to Darius' offers, Alexander states that he is willing to let Darius keep his kingship and remain king of kings, but only if he would obey Alexander, for the privilege is 'granted him by Alexander's generosity'.¹ In comparing this statement with Darius I's rhetoric, one would see that Darius I in his inscriptions lists the countries that are under his rule, while first declaring that he is lord over them by the will of god: "By the favor of Ahuramazda these are the countries which I seized outside of Persia".² At the start of that same inscription, Darius praises Ahuramazda: "A great god is Ahuramazda, who created this earth, who created yonder sky, who created man, who created happiness for man, who made Darius king, one king of many, one lord of many."³ And further on: "This which has been done, all that by the will of Ahuramazda I did."⁴

In yet another inscription we encounter the same declaration: "Great Ahuramazda, the greatest of gods—he created Darius the king, he bestowed on him the kingdom; by the favor of Ahuramazda Darius is king".⁵ Or in his Behistun inscription: "By the favor of Ahuramazda I am king; Ahuramazda bestowed the kingdom upon me";⁶ "these are the countries which came unto me; by the favor of Ahuramazda I was king of them: Persia, Elam . . . in all, 23 provinces."⁷

What occurs in Diodorus seems to have Alexander put himself in god's position and declare his favor and will towards Darius keeping his empire as the king of kings, but only recognize Alexander as his authority. The phrase 'granted by Alexander's generosity' seems to be modeled after the Old Persian phrase 'by the favor of Ahuramazda'.

While the origin of the message is the great Persian king's declamations, probably considered and copied for their potency and effect on the Iranian public, yet for Alexander the core meaning of the message has been reversed. Instead of him filling the mold of Darius I and receiving recognition as his rightful successor, down the line, he is on the contrary exposed as a hubristic despot with claims of divinity—and in the process

¹ Diodorus XVII. 54. 6.

² DNa 15 f., Kent, p. 138.

³ DNa 1–8, Kent, p. 138.

⁴ DNa 47 f., Kent, p. 138.

⁵ DPd 1–5, Kent, p. 136.

⁶ DB I. 11–12, Kent, p. 119.

⁷ DB I. 12–17, Kent, p. 119.

as a result losing his qualification. The very tenet has been inverted for him. Where the Iranian king claims god's approval for his rule over the empire, thus clearly underlining the importance of god's benevolent acceptance for his kingship, Alexander disqualifies himself by simply putting himself in god's place.

Although it is also possible to assume reverberations from Alexander and his father's claims to divinity⁸ affecting his performance or the reports on his behaviour in Iran, as well, yet the fact that the model seems to be the rhetoric of the Achaemenid king, makes it more probable to see the anomalies as originating in relation to that context. At the end the message resulting from this mix up would seem to be the Iranian god's disapproval with the rule of the foreign aggressor. Such tacit verdict is even more significant in light of the fact that Alexander in some stage of his campaigns in Iran shows overt inclinations towards Iranian customs and religious observations. However, at the earlier stages and in the course of the same diplomatic exchanges, he portrays himself as one informed of the Iranian laws to the extent of accusing Darius of having over-stepped such laws and seizing the throne illegally.⁹

As noted earlier, the frame for the interactions is that of Iranian customs and laws. The audience and those whose judgements were supposed to be affected by this propaganda were also the Iranians.

Another example of the same process at work is seen in relation to the reports on Alexander receiving parts of Darius' army, after Darius' death and while campaigning in Hyrcania (c. 329 BC). Included in this list of suppliants are some Iranian generals and 1,500 Greek mercenaries.¹⁰ Here again the accounts contain certain misplaced and inverted echoes from Darius I's inscriptions, informing of Alexander's divine aspirations. For, where Darius I had evoked Ahuramazda as the witness to his veracity, the reverse of the import of that phrase is reflected on Alexander as if he had attempted to portray himself as a god.

In Curtius¹¹ that reference is even more direct and Alexander is referred to as a god, in the same context.

⁸ Plutarch, *Alexander* III. 3; Arrian III. 3. 2, IV. 10. 6–7, VII. 8. 3; Diodorus XVI. 92. 5, 95. 1; Bosworth, 1988a, pp. 278 f.; W. Heckel & J.C. Yardley, *Alexander the Great, Historical Texts in Translation*, Blackwell, 2004, pp. 221 f.

⁹ Arrian II. 14. 5; see above the chapter II on 'letters'.

¹⁰ Diodorus XVII. 76. 2.

¹¹ Curtius VI. IV. 12.

Interestingly such ascriptions also survive in Arrian,¹² although more subtly and rather as the vestiges of another line from the same inscription of Darius I. Nevertheless, they succeed in imparting the same purport.

Darius I in the fourth column of his inscription at Behistun, after enumerating his quenching of the revolts that had engulfed the entire Achaemenid empire at the advent of his coming to power, states: "I turn myself quickly to Ahuramazda, that this is true..."¹³ The idea of turning over quickly to god¹⁴ is similar to putting himself in god's hand and at his mercy in the face of the claims that he is making.¹⁵

At this stage of Alexander's campaigns, with Darius dead and Bessus in Bactria claiming Achaemenid kingship, the propaganda endeavours would have intensified. A useful context with which to identify in order to drive home the message of 'Alexander the rightful Achaemenid king' and establish it for the Iranians would have been that of Darius I's campaigns, reminding the people of those troubled times and Darius I's powerful establishment of the law and order, based on his reliance on god's blessing and approval. Now too the Iranians were supposed to see Alexander as another Darius and by hearkening back to Darius' declamations extend his message to Alexander's rule. That the propaganda of Darius I would have impacted the public, after over two centuries, is evident by the survival of its vestiges in the Iranian National Epic, the *Shāhnāma* (10th century AD). The medium of transfer is believed to have been the minstrels, performing at public places and imparting the king's message as well.¹⁶ Once such material had been included in the poets' repertoire, it would have been handed down through the generations and thus survived even as late as

¹² Arrian III. 23. 8–9.

¹³ DB IV. 43–45, Kent, p. 131.

¹⁴ *Auramazdāha ragam vartaivaīy*, Kent, p. 205, *raga*, 'speed', p. 207, *vart*, 'turn'.

¹⁵ Babylonian version has 'take an oath', see E.N. Von Voigtlander, *The Behistun Inscription of Darius the Great Babylonian Version*, London, 1978, p. 61, section 46.

¹⁶ P. Jamzadeh, "An Achaemenid epical poem hypothesized", *Studia Iranica* 20, 1991, pp. 229–232; *Id.*, "Remnants of the legacy of the Achaemenids in the *Shāhnāma* of Firdawsi", *Proceedings of the Second European Conference of Iranian Studies*, ed. B.G. Fragner *et al.*, Rome, 1995, pp. 317–323; *Id.*, "Reflections of Darius' propaganda and Aeschylus' parody in Firdawsi's epic", *Acta Orientalia Belgica* XII, 1999, pp. 253–258; *Id.*, "An Achaemenid motif seen in later epic and art", *Iranica Antiqua* XXXV, 2000, pp. 47–56; *Id.*, "A *Shāhnāma* passage in an Achaemenid context", *Iranica Antiqua* XXXIX, 2004, pp. 383–388; *Id.*, "Reflections from Persepolis in a Mirror for Princes", *Iranica Antiqua* XLI, 2006, pp. 71–78; On minstrels in ancient times, see also Athenaeus XIV. 633; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* I, II, 1; M. Boyce, "The Parthian *gosān* and Iranian minstrel tradition", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1957, pp. 19 f.

the 10th century *Shāhnāma*. Alexander would also have been advised to employ this established venue, in content as well as medium.

However, it seems that at some stage the very essence of the message had been inverted for Alexander. Instead of god verifying his claims, as he would have Darius I's, Alexander himself is seen as the divinity claiming to be endowed with the same authority. Where Darius I had meted out harsh punishments on the rebels, for: "Ahuramazda put them into my hand; as was my desire, so I did unto them",¹⁷ Arrian has the former enemies place themselves in Alexander's hands,¹⁸ to do what he would with them.¹⁹ And Alexander deals with them with various measures.²⁰

Furthermore, where Diodorus reports that Greek mercenaries "promptly turned themselves over to Alexander, and receiving a full pardon for their previous hostility . . .",²¹ Curtius has them first require a pledge of safety from Alexander,²² which he does not give and simply orders them to come to him.²³ And "after long hesitation and many changes of mind, they finally promised that they would come."²⁴ Some choose death rather than risking the manner of his dealing with them.²⁵ The merciful clemency is not seen in all the reports.

It would seem possible to conclude that Diodorus' phrase²⁶ is a translation of an Old Persian phrase originating from Darius I's inscriptions²⁷ and that Curtius' report²⁸ is a secondary reflection, playing with the original phrase. Although the primary aim of portraying Alexander as the god is reported by him as well: "If Alexander should order Nabarzanes to come to him, he would come without fear. He had no apprehension that so great a king would violate a pledge which he had given; the gods were not wont to be deceived by a god."²⁹

¹⁷ DB IV. 35–36, Kent, p. 131.

¹⁸ Arrian III. 23. 9.

¹⁹ Arrian III. 23. 8.

²⁰ Diodorus XVII. 76. 1–2; Arrian III. 23. 6–9, 24. 4; Curtius VI. IV. 8–14, VI. V. 6–10, 22–23.

²¹ Diodorus XVII. 76. 2.

²² Curtius VI. V. 6.

²³ Curtius VI. V. 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Curtius VI. V. 9.

²⁶ Diodorus XVII. 76. 2.

²⁷ DB IV. 44, Kent, p. 131.

²⁸ Curtius VI. V. 8.

²⁹ Curtius VI. IV. 12; cf. Atkinson, 1994, p. 184 for 'abject flattery' when Achaemenid kings were not seen as divine; cf. Bosworth, 1988a, pp. 278 f.; Heckel & Yardley, 2004, pp. 221 f.

2. *The Incident of Cyrus' Tomb*

Although Alexander is stated in the sources as an admirer of Cyrus,³⁰ yet during his overlordship the tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae is plundered and his corpse assaulted. Although the accounts of the incident and Alexander's treatment of the matter differ in the sources, they all place the discovery of the robbery later in the campaigns and after Alexander's return from India³¹ (c. 324 BC). The blame is variously placed. In Plutarch's account, it is a prominent Macedonian from Pella who is guilty and put to death by Alexander.³² Strabo states the general chaos of the times as the main culprit.³³ In Arrian's account, it is not clear who the guilty person is, but the Magi, who for generations had been guarding the tomb and performing rites for Cyrus' soul, are punished by torture in order to reveal their information on the matter, but to no avail.³⁴

The contents of the tomb which seem to form the primary focus of the attention also differ in the sources. Strabo and Arrian, who both follow Aristobulus' account, report either: "a golden couch, a table with cups, a golden coffin, and numerous garments and ornaments set with precious stones"³⁵ or

in the chamber was placed a golden sarcophagus, in which Cyrus' body had been buried; a divan stood by the sarcophagus, and this divan had feet of wrought gold; its coverlet was of Babylonian carpets, and for an undercovering, purple rugs. Upon it was placed a tunic and vests also of Babylonian workmanship. Then there were, besides, Median trousers; and robes dyed blue lay there, as he says; and furthermore some of purple, some of this colour, some of that; necklaces also and scimitars and earrings of stones set in gold; and a table stood there also. It was on the midst of the divan that the sarcophagus, containing Cyrus' body, was placed.³⁶

According to Curtius, however, the contents of the tomb are simple and of a different nature. They are formed only of the king's weapons: "The king's

³⁰ Strabo XI. 11. 4; Curtius VII. VI. 20; Pliny, *Natural History* VI. 18.

³¹ Arrian VI. 29. 4–11; Plutarch, *Alexander* 69. 2; Curtius X. 1. 30 f.; Strabo XV. 3. 7.

³² Plutarch, *Alexander* 69. 2.

³³ Strabo XV. 3. 7.

³⁴ Arrian VI. 29. 11; cf. Strabo XV. 3. 7 who also mentions the Magi and their duties; M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. II, *Under the Achaemenians*, Leiden, 1982, pp. 70, 290 f.; Curtius IV. VI. 6 on the Magi valuing silence, especially in relation to the secrets of kings, may also be relevant to this context.

³⁵ Strabo XV. 3. 7.

³⁶ Arrian VI. 29. 6–7.

mouldering shield, two Scythian bows, and a scimitar.”³⁷ However, the description of a certain fabulous riches precedes this account in relation to the gifts brought by the satrap by the name of Orsines,³⁸ who is later wrongly accused of the crime and executed.³⁹

Curtius states that Orsines was satrap of Pasargadae, a prominent man of high birth and wealth. As a descendant of Cyrus, his wealth included his inheritance as well as what he had amassed during his long sovereignty. He brought Alexander and his friends various gifts, such as troops of horses, chariots adorned with gold and silver, furniture and gems, vases of gold, robes of purple and 3,000 talents of coined silver, although he failed to give anything to a very important friend of Alexander, Bagoas the eunuch.⁴⁰ This mistake costs him his life, for Bagoas accuses Orsines and causes his death.⁴¹ However, what is of special interest here is the list of gifts that Orsines had brought. These resembles those depicted on the Apadana reliefs at Persepolis, where we also have horses, chariots, vases and vestments brought by the subject nations to the king, who is attended by his nobles behind him.⁴²

Elsewhere Orsines is stated as the overall commander of the forces at Gaugamela, and “a descendant of the ‘seven Persians’ and tracing his genealogy also to Cyrus, that most renowned king”.⁴³ Furthermore, it is interesting that just prior to this episode, Arrian mentions a Median pretender by the name of Baryaxes and his execution.⁴⁴ This is stated just before the accounts of the tomb and after mentioning Orsines’ assumption of power.⁴⁵ It was suggested earlier that this Baryaxes’ account may in fact have been mixed with those of Bessus, the satrap of Bactria and pretender to the throne on the strength of his genealogy, who was executed in Media in the fashion of Darius I’s execution of the Median pretenders.⁴⁶

³⁷ Curtius X. 1. 31.

³⁸ Curtius X. 1. 24.

³⁹ Curtius X. 1. 37.

⁴⁰ Curtius X. 1. 22–25.

⁴¹ Curtius X. 1. 26–37.

⁴² P. Jamzadeh, “The Apadana stairway reliefs and the metaphor of conquest”, *Iranica Antiqua* XXVII, 1993, pp. 125–147 which includes the related bibliography as well.

⁴³ Curtius IV. 12. 8; cf. Arrian VI. 29. 2 for the accounts of an Orsines who following the satrap’s death and in the absence of Alexander who is on his Indian campaign, assumes satrapal responsibilities on his own judgement; see also Briant, pp. 193, 736 for the interesting observation that Orsines’ importance should be understood as the chief of the Pasargadae tribe.

⁴⁴ Arrian VI. 29. 3.

⁴⁵ Arrian VI. 29. 2–4.

⁴⁶ See the chapter V on Bessus, n. 27.

Interestingly here too it is possible to see the intrusion of the propaganda of Achaemenid kings, as documented in the reliefs of Persepolis, in the reports about a Persian satrap who is descended from both Cyrus and Darius (seen in the mention of 'the seven'). Such designations would more precisely accord with an account of Xerxes who also had to advance arguments and justifications for his succession to the throne of Darius I.⁴⁷

Moreover, it is significant to note that, according to Curtius, it is Alexander himself who opens the tomb of Cyrus in order to pay his respects.⁴⁸ During this visit he enacts a ritual that may be seen as the coronation of the dead king: "having placed a crown of gold upon the coffin in which the body lay, he covered it over with the robe which he himself was accustomed to wear."⁴⁹ One may recall that Plutarch relates the coronation of Achaemenid kings at Pasargadae, during which ritual they would lay aside their own proper robe and put on the robe that Cyrus the Elder used to wear before he became king.⁵⁰ In this regard, one would also take into account Alexander's act of covering Darius' dead body with his own cloak.⁵¹ In other words, the roles are reversed. In claiming the Achaemenid kingship, instead of enacting the required rituals at Pasargadae, he is extending his own protection over the royal line from its founder to the last king. He is *Alexander* 'the protector of men'.⁵² One may also note the satrap's name, Orsines, in which perhaps can be recognized the Persian *Khusro* (?), 'king' and the title of several Sasanian kings.

In advancing hypothetical questions further, it can perhaps be seen that the lost layers of accounts emerge in which, although Alexander is the one who desecrates the tomb, at least in an Iranian Zoroastrian context⁵³ and for it a prominent Macedonian from Pella is punished,⁵⁴ or should have been punished, if this designation had been meant as a reference to Alexander himself. Yet he extends his protection over the body of Cyrus by his nature or position of being 'a protector of men'. Interceding with this report are accounts of a Persian king with correct genealogy

⁴⁷ XPf. 15–35, R.G. Kent, *Old Persian, Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*, New Haven, 1953, p. 150; Herodotus 7. 2 f.; cf. P. Jamzadeh, "A *Shāhnāma* passage in an Achaemenid context", *Iranica Antiqua* XXIX, 2004, pp. 383–388.

⁴⁸ Curtius X. 1. 30.

⁴⁹ Curtius X. 1. 32.

⁵⁰ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* III. 1–2.

⁵¹ Plutarch, *Moralia* 332 F.

⁵² See the translations of Arrian II. 12. 8.

⁵³ Boyce, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

⁵⁴ Plutarch, *Alexander* 69. 2.

of descent from both Achaemenid royal lines and whose description of riches resembles that which is depicted at Persepolis. Perhaps this is an echoe of an account on Darius III seeking to establish his rightful claim that has come to intercede with propaganda or justifications advanced for Alexander in the context of a historical event. It is interesting to note that the historians' reports include references to the inscriptions on the tomb,⁵⁵ one version anticipating Alexander's visit.⁵⁶

With regard to the intrusion of echoes from Darius I's rhetoric, perhaps it is relevant to note his Susa E inscription where he says:

By the favor of Ahuramazda, much *handiwork* which previously had been put out of its place, that I put in its place. A town by name . . . (its) wall fallen from age, before this unrepaired—I built another wall (to serve) from that time into the future,⁵⁷ (my emphasis)

and compare it with Alexander's orders for repairing Cyrus' tomb. As Arrian reports on Aristobulus' authority:

Aristobulus says that he received orders from Alexander to put the tomb in good order again, to deposit such parts of the body as were left in the sarcophagus again, and place its lid upon it; where it was damaged, to repair it; to spread the divan with ribands, and to restore, just like the originals, all else that had been placed there, by way of ornaments, piece by piece; to obliterate the door both by walling it up in stone and partly by covering it with clay; and then to set on the clay the royal seal.⁵⁸

Perhaps it is possible to see a connection between this report with its emphasis on the restoration of various types of handiworks and Darius I's inscriptions. Does the Old Persian word *dastakarta*: *dasta*, 'hand' + *karta*, 'made'⁵⁹ form the basis of Aristobulus' expanded report? And does this report signify an attempt by Alexander to emulate Darius I, but in relation to honouring Cyrus? It is also relevant to recall Darius I's Susa Foundation inscription in which he enumerates the contributions of the various

⁵⁵ Arrian VI. 29. 8; Strabo XV. 3. 7; Plutarch, *Alexander* 69. 4.

⁵⁶ Plutarch, *Alexander* 69. 4; cf. David Stronach, "Of Cyrus, Darius and Alexander: A New Look at the 'Epitaphs' of Cyrus the Great", *Variatio Delectat, Iran und der Westen, Gedenkschrift für Peter Calmeyer*, 2000, pp. 681–701 for an analysis of the histories in relation to the archaeological evidence. I am grateful to Prof. Stronach for a copy of his paper.

⁵⁷ DSE 41–49, Kent, p. 142; cf. p. 190 "*dastakarta*", 'handmade'.

⁵⁸ Arrian VI. 29. 10, trans. E.I. Robson, 1929, p. 199; cf. Strabo XV. 3. 7: "Aristobulus says that at the behest of the king he passed through this entrance and decorated the tomb", which precedes the robbery.

⁵⁹ Kent, p. 190.

nations of his empire in building his palace at Susa,⁶⁰ and thus designating his empire as a compilation of people of various talents, craftsmanship and raw materials.⁶¹ Is Alexander also indicating his interests in the same criteria and copying Darius I, but only through his henchman and in relation to honouring Cyrus, whom he is said to have admired, albeit in the context of destroying his city?

Perhaps there are multiple layers of reports involved, one of which would seem to include a reference to a knowledge of Darius I's inscriptions and his honouring craftsmanship, in otherwise bundles of inconsistent information, not all in Alexander's favor.

3. *The King and the Ideology of Truth*

On the subject of telling the truth and its importance in relation to the position of the king, Arrian seems to be unique among the historians of Alexander in citing a passage that reflects borrowings from the Achaemenid kings' ideology as evidenced in their inscriptions. At the same time the passage in question approximates that which Herodotus informs on the manners and customs of the Persians of his time. It is argued here that what survives in Arrian shows influences from a body of lore on the Persians customs that had primarily been affected by the Achaemenid kings' ideology as a result of an overt attempt to advance Alexander as the heir to the Achaemenids.

After the Susa wedding,⁶² which only Arrian characterizes it as having been conducted in "Persian fashion",⁶³ and during which Alexander and eighty of his officers had married noble Persian ladies, with Alexander providing the dowries as well as gifts to all the other soldiers who had taken Asian wives,⁶⁴ it is reported that Alexander had proceeded to settle all debts of the army.⁶⁵ However, some of the men had doubted his intentions in this regard, thinking that he meant to find out who was living

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 142 f.

⁶¹ P. Jamzadeh, *The Achaemenid Throne: Its Significance and Its Legacy*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1991, n. 278; *Id.*, 1993, n. 2.

⁶² Arrian VII. 4. 4–8; cf. Justin XII. 10. 9–10; Plutarch, *Alexander* 70. 2; Athenaeus XII. 538b–539a.

⁶³ Arrian VII. 4. 7.

⁶⁴ Arrian VII. 4. 4–8; cf. Plutarch, *Alexander* 70. 2; Justin XII. 10. 9–10; Athenaeus XII. 538b–539a.

⁶⁵ Arrian VII. 5. 1; Plutarch, *Alexander* 70. 2; Justin XII. 11. 1; cf. Diodorus XVII. 109. 1–2; Curtius X. 2. 9–11.

beyond his means and regular pay.⁶⁶ Their distrust and doubt offends Alexander and according to Arrian prompts Alexander to say: "The king, must always speak the truth to his subjects, and the subjects must never suppose that their king speaks anything but truth."⁶⁷ While surely one cannot deny the fact that telling the truth is a value with timeless universal acceptance, nevertheless one cannot also overlook the fact that this value finds a significant residence in the inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings, especially those of Darius I. In these declamations, the rule of the Achaemenid king is seen as a force against the 'Lie', which forms the root cause of all evil.⁶⁸ The king defines his success and gods' support of his rule solely on this basis: "For this reason Ahuramazda bore aid, and the other gods who are, because I was not hostile, I was not a Lie-follower, I was not a doer of wrong—neither I nor my family. According to righteousness I conducted myself."⁶⁹ Furthermore, Lie constitutes one of the three most dreaded evils that could destroy a country and against which the king prays: "May Ahuramazda protect this country from a hostile army, from famine, from the Lie. Upon this country may there not come an army, nor famine, nor the Lie."⁷⁰ As pointed out the concept of truth in antagonism with lie had formed the very basis of the political-religious ideology of the Achaemenids.⁷¹ This ideology is even manifested in the throne name Artaxšaça/Artaxerxes 'having a kingdom of justice'⁷² adopted by several Achaemenid kings.

While the Achaemenid royal inscriptions adequately substantiate the importance of the value of truth for the king and his world view, there is also contemporary evidence surviving on the significance of this concept for the Persian people in general. Herodotus (I. 136) informs that: "The period of a boy's education is between the ages of five and twenty, and they are taught three things only: to ride, to use the bow, and to speak the truth."⁷³

Interestingly in the same passage Herodotus also mentions the Persians horror of debt and the relation they saw between owing money and telling lies: "They consider telling lies more disgraceful than anything else,

⁶⁶ Arrian VII. 5. 1; Curtius X. 2. 10.

⁶⁷ Arrian VII. 5. 2.

⁶⁸ DB IV, Kent, pp. 131–132; *cf.* DN, Kent, pp. 137–140.

⁶⁹ DB IV. 61–5, Kent, p. 131.

⁷⁰ DPd. 15–20, Kent, p. 136.

⁷¹ Briant, pp. 138, 570.

⁷² Kent, p. 171; Briant, p. 329.

⁷³ Trans. A. De Selincourt/A.R. Burns, Penguin, 1980, p. 98.

and, next to that, owing money. There are many reasons for their horror of debt, but the chief is their conviction that a man who owes money is bound to tell lies."⁷⁴ In Arrian's passage on Alexander and the soldiers' debt also the argument evolves around these two entities: debt and lying. But interestingly they occur in an equipoise: the soldiers owe money and the king is under the suspicion of lying.

While it is possible to assume for a somewhat broken connection from Herodotus to Arrian, in relation to Persian customs forming the basis of this passage in Arrian, on the other hand it is also possible to see a passage from Darius I's Behistun inscription influencing Alexander's rhetoric in this regard as it is similar to what Arrian reports on the notion of the king being especially perceived as beyond lying. Towards the end of column IV, Darius addresses the reader and says: "Thou who shalt hereafter read this inscription, let that which has been done by me convince thee; do not think it a lie."⁷⁵

In an earlier work it was suggested that the declamations of Achaemenid kings had been propagated far and wide in the empire, creating a residence and appearing centuries later in the accounts of later rulers, removed in time and locality.⁷⁶ It was argued that the tradition of minstrel poetry and its effective reach to the public at large, with its cumulative deposits of prestigious motifs, had functioned as the intermediary vehicle.⁷⁷

That minstrels were active in Achaemenid and Median courts is known from the Classical sources.⁷⁸ Through the Achaemenid inscriptions also one gains insight on the use of the craft of minstrels and oral propagation of the kings' messages. Darius I in his tomb inscription states: "When what has been done by me thou shalt see or *hear of*, both in the palace and in the war camp"⁷⁹ (my emphasis). Or further on in the same inscription: "Let not that seem false to thee, which has been heard by thy ears. That do thou hear, which is communicated to thee."⁸⁰ That minstrels would have been supported by the king and actively encouraged in their craft can be

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ DB IV. 42–43, Kent, p. 131.

⁷⁶ P. Jamzadeh, "Royal rhetoric and minstrel poetry: transmission of formulas from Achaemenid court to Medieval European courts", *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute* 64, 2001, pp. 18–26.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*; see also n. 16.

⁷⁸ Athenaeus XIV. 633, XIII. 35; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* I. 2. 1; cf. M. Boyce, "The Parthian *Gōsān* and Iranian Minstrel Tradition", *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1957, pp. 10–45.

⁷⁹ DNb. 29–30, Kent, p. 140.

⁸⁰ DNb. 54–55, Kent, p. 140.

witnessed in Darius' statement where he commands: "Now let that which has been done by me convince thee; thus to the people impart, do not conceal it."⁸¹ Furthermore, it is significant to note that the king envisions his empire in terms of people of different languages as well. This occurs in an inscription on the south wall of Persepolis, in Akkadian only (DPg):

King over this vast land, in which there are many countries: Persia, Media, and the other countries with other languages, mountains, and plains, from this side of the Bitter River and from the other side of the Bitter River, from this side of the parched land and from the other side of the parched land.⁸²

Moreover, Darius I also informs of the distribution of reproductions of his Behistun inscription throughout the empire, having been accomplished by the co-operation of various people: "Afterwards this inscription I sent off everywhere among the provinces. The people unitedly worked upon it."⁸³

Alexander through a number of venues could have been exposed to the Achaemenids' propaganda. There is a possibility of their message having reached his land prior to his time. While certainly as the conqueror of their empire he would have been in a position of advantage with regards to the access to the texts. In his attempts to style himself as the legitimate successor to the Achaemenids, he must have found their propaganda material most useful. Furthermore, it is also possible to see that his adopted Achaemenid propaganda material at a further stage of composition had found its way to a mix of lore on Persian customs that had included Herodotus' information as well, the complex compilation having been used by one of Arrian's sources and eventually appearing as it has.

4. *Bessus' Punishment*

As noted earlier, the relevance of impaling Bessus at Ecbatana is not clear in the context of Alexander Histories.⁸⁴ He was satrap of Bactria,⁸⁵ of Persian origin and Achaemenid descent.⁸⁶ His rebellion had caused much

⁸¹ DB IV. 53, Kent, p. 132.

⁸² Briant, p. 179; cf. A.T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire*, Chicago, 1948, p. 175; E.F. Schmidt, *Persepolis I, Sculptures. Reliefs. Inscriptions*, Chicago, 1953, pp. 32, 62 f.

⁸³ DB IV. 90–92, Kent, p. 132.

⁸⁴ See above the chapter V on 'Bessus' Fate'.

⁸⁵ Arrian III. 8. 3, 21. 1; Curtius V. 8. 5, V. 9. 8; Diodorus XVII. 73. 4.

⁸⁶ Arrian III. 21. 5, 30. 4.

trouble for Alexander, although his primary guilt and basis for receiving hard punishments from Alexander was his treason against Darius.

The histories accuse Bessus of pretensions to the throne, prior to Darius' death, which he brings about amid unusual circumstances.⁸⁷ The punishment that he suffers resembles that meted out by Darius I to a Median pretender to the throne of Media in the advent of Darius I's coming to power.⁸⁸ It was argued that the choice of Ecbatana for Bessus may also reflect influences from Darius I's rhetoric in relation to the Median rebel.

In the same vein, one may also note Darius I's emphasis on the value of loyalty and its justification for his punishments against rebels. He states: "Within these countries, the man who was loyal, him I rewarded well; (him) who was evil, him I punished well."⁸⁹ It seems that Alexander, in seeking to emulate the great Achaemenid king, also finds it relevant to punish the rebel on charges of disloyalty to his king, in the same manner and at the same place. Perhaps he wished the Iranians to note the context that he was drawing from and, as a result, eradicate any sentiments of sympathy that they may have had for Bessus' cause. In this light, Bessus was not to be seen as a possible legitimate successor to the Achaemenid throne but as a disloyal rebel who had to be punished according to the criteria of the founder of the line.

5. *Darius I's World Order*

Plutarch in the context of his justifications for Alexander's adoption of Iranian costume⁹⁰ states:

Alexander desired to render all upon earth subject to one law of reason and one form of government and to reveal all men as one people, and to this purpose he made himself conform. But if the deity that sent down Alexander's soul into this world of ours had not recalled him quickly, one law would govern all mankind, and they all would look toward one rule of justice as though toward a common source of light. But as it is, that part of the world which has not looked upon Alexander has remained without sunlight.⁹¹

⁸⁷ See the chapter IV on 'Darius' final days'.

⁸⁸ Kent, pp. 123–124, DB. II. 73–78.

⁸⁹ Kent, p. 119, DB I. 20–22.

⁹⁰ Plutarch, *Moralia* 330.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 330 D.

Plutarch continues with comparing Alexander as a philosopher king with despotic kings.⁹²

While no doubt Alexander's vision is primarily influenced by Greek philosophers, nevertheless, the fact that this piece comes in the context of his Iranization measures and shows similarities with Darius I's vision of his kingship and the importance of his laws in maintaining the fabric of his empire is also significant.

Darius I had stated that the earth had been bestowed to him by Ahuramazda in order to bring peace to it and put it down in its place, rescuing it from commotion of chaos and rebellion.⁹³ It was his law that held the countries under his rule firm.⁹⁴ While the authoritative tone of the king is manifest in relation to the importance of his subjects' observing his laws,⁹⁵ yet it is also noteworthy that the individual's rights are also considered by him, forming a concern of his kingship. He states:

Much which was ill-done, I made good. Provinces were in commotion; one man was smiting the other. The following I brought about by the favor of Ahuramazda, that the one does not smite the other at all, each one is in his place. My law—of that they feel fear, so that the stronger does not smite nor destroy the weak.⁹⁶

Perhaps Alexander's world view in its formulation had taken into account the Achaemenid king's declarations as well.⁹⁷

That the Achaemenid inscriptions were accessible to Alexander's historians and noted by them is evidenced in Onesicritus' account about the tomb inscription of Darius I,⁹⁸ which in fact finds attestations in the actual inscription.⁹⁹

⁹² *Ibid.*, 330 E f.; cf. 328 E & 329 B for Alexander and Plato and Zeno and references to Law.

⁹³ DNa 31–37, Kent, pp. 137–138.

⁹⁴ DNa 21, Kent, pp. 137–138.

⁹⁵ DB I. 22–24, Kent, p. 119; DNb. 58–60, Kent, p. 140.

⁹⁶ DSe. 30–41, Kent, p. 142.

⁹⁷ For other instances, see the chapter IX on 'Accounts of the Mutiny'.

⁹⁸ Strabo 15. 3. 8.

⁹⁹ Cf. DNb 5–11, 40–45, Kent, p. 140.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ZOROASTRIAN ECHOES IN ALEXANDER HISTORIES

1. *Zoroastrian References in the Story of Clitus*

A somewhat enigmatic account in the Alexander Histories is the story of Clitus in which not only symbolic allusions preponderate but the role of fate and the wrath of gods in determining events are also heavily stressed. Especially noteworthy for our study in this mixture of metaphors and justifications is a glimpse of the survival of a Zoroastrian tradition in relation to observations for the departed souls.

In the sources the story of Clitus' murder by Alexander is related after the accounts of Bessus, Alexander's Iranizations, and in the context of the problems arising from his newly adopted customs.¹ Although Arrian states that this event took place later, he nevertheless found it relevant to relate it then and in that context.²

The culmination of the tragic circumstances is ascribed to divine wrath due to changes in the king's habits of worship, or his neglect in such matters. Furthermore, the main frame of the story evolves around the idea of a conflict between the old and the new. The older generation of soldiers are compared with the younger army of Alexander and found wanting.

Clitus is an old soldier of Philip, Alexander's father, whose relationship with Alexander reaches back to his early childhood. His sister is noted as Alexander's nurse who reared him since infancy and whom Alexander had loved and respected like a mother.³ At a banquet and in the course of heavy drinking, which according to Arrian had been in barbaric ways,⁴ comparisons between the older soldiers of Philip and the younger corps of Alexander gets out of hand, leading to exchanges of insults between Clitus and Alexander and finally to Alexander's killing of Clitus.⁵ Immediately after Alexander is gripped by such a degree of remorse and guilt that he

¹ Arrian IV. 8. 1 f.; Justin XII. 6; Curtius VIII. I. 20 f.; Plutarch, *Alexander* 50. 1 f.

² Arrian IV. 8. 1.

³ Arrian IV. 9. 3; Justin XII. 6; Curtius VIII. II. 8.

⁴ Arrian IV. 8. 2; cf. Bosworth, 1995, pp. 53 f. for this mis-designation.

⁵ Arrian IV. 8. 7–9; Curtius VIII. I. 52; Justin XII. 6; Plutarch, *Alexander* 51.6.

spends “three days without food or drink, and careless of all other bodily needs”.⁶

One may note that in Zoroastrian tradition the period of three days after death has a special importance and requires certain observations, among which is the abstention from meat by the relatives of the departed.⁷ On the dawn of the fourth day, the soul which has thus far lingered around the body departs and ascends to the bridge of the crossing.⁸ During the three nights a fire or a light is kept burning for the soul in order to protect it from demons.⁹ At the birth of a newborn child, a fire is also kept burning for three days and nights as protection against demons, wizards and witches.¹⁰

In the story of Clitus, the references to his sister having reared Alexander as a nurse are perhaps significant in this relation. There are certain other details as well that seem to point to the existence of a removed version of an account that had references to the Zoroastrian tradition of the soul's crossing over the bridge and the three-night vigil.

In passing through the vestibule, when leaving the banquet, Clitus has no lights. It is then that, according to Curtius, Alexander attacks and kills him.¹¹ In Arrian's version, Clitus is led over three barriers: door, wall and ditch of the citadel in order to escape Alexander. However, he returns just as Alexander is calling his name. He repeats his own name and is killed.¹² In Plutarch's account, the period of three days is spread out in the story. It covers two days prior to the event, when Alexander has an ominous dream, and the day after which is spent in mourning.¹³ In Plutarch's version, the number ‘3’ finds other references as well, in relation to omens of death that occur prior to the banquet and the fatal encounter.¹⁴

⁶ Arrian IV. 9. 4; cf. Curtius VIII. 2. 11: “the king lay in seclusion for three days”, . . . “they with difficulty prevailed upon him to take food”; Justin XII. 6: “abstaining from food for four days”.

⁷ *Shāyast lā-Shāyast* XVII. 2; cf. *Dādīstān-i Dīnik* XXVIII. 1–7.

⁸ *Dādīstān-i Dīnik* XX. 3; *Arda Viraf Namag* IV. 8–36, XVII. 5–27.

⁹ *Dādīstān-i Dīnik* XXVIII. 5; E.B.N. Dhabhar, *The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz and Others*, Bombay, 1932, p. 59.

¹⁰ *Shāyast lā-Shāyast* XII. 12.

¹¹ Curtius VIII. I. 49–50; cf. Plutarch, *Lycurgus* XII. 7 for a Spartan custom.

¹² Arrian IV. 8. 9.

¹³ Plutarch, *Alexander* 50. 3, 52. 1.

¹⁴ Plutarch, *Alexander* 50. 2–4:

It happened on this wise. Some people came bringing Greek fruit to the king from the sea-board. He admired its perfection and beauty and called Cleitus, wishing to show it to him and share it with him. It chanced that Cleitus was sacrificing, but he gave up the sacrifice and came; and three of the sheep on which libations had already

It is interesting that the sources relate the cause of this misfortune as the wrath of gods due to the changes in Alexander's religious practices, although they attribute it to his neglect towards a Greek god by instead sacrificing to another god. Arrian has Dionysus neglected and the Dioscuri attended to.¹⁵ According to Curtius, it is the annual sacrifice to Father Liber that has been forgotten and hence his anger experienced.¹⁶

However, one wonders if Alexander's Iranization had gone beyond the mere manifestations of the costume and the girdle, if the girdle had indeed had more of a religious significance and its donning had required ceremonies as well which in later re-working of the accounts had been justified as neglecting a Greek god and sacrificing to another.

In relation to the three days, one may note that, according to Arrian, Alexander partook of another period of seclusion as well. At Opis and in the process of dismissing his older soldiers, he was faced with their discontent as well as their objections to his new Iranian customs.¹⁷ In response he had addressed them with a speech that recounted their modest past, prior to his father's rule, and the increase in their fortune ever since.¹⁸ He then went into seclusion in his palace and

paid no attention to his bodily needs, nor was seen by any of the companions; and, indeed, not even on the day following. But on the third day he summoned within the picked men among the Persians, and divided among them the command of the different brigades; and permitted only those who were now his relatives to give him the customary kiss.¹⁹

It seems that the number '3' has a significance here as well and the period of abstention separates Alexander from his own old self as a Macedonian and re-introduces him as a Persian. It is as if a period of secluded mourning for his own old self, according to his new practices, had been ascribed to him by a critical account of the event. Eventually he reconciles with

been poured came following after him. When the king learned of this circumstance, he imparted it to his soothsayers, Aristander and Cleomantis the Lacedaemonian. Then, on their telling him that the omen was bad, he ordered them to sacrifice in all haste for the safety of Cleitus. For he himself, two days before this, had seen a strange vision in his sleep; he thought he saw Cleitus sitting with the sons of Parmenio in black robes, and all were dead. However, Cleitus did not finish his sacrifice, but came at once to the supper of the king, who had sacrificed to the Dioscuri.

¹⁵ Arrian IV. 8. 2.

¹⁶ Curtius VIII. 2. 6.

¹⁷ Arrian VII. 8. 1–3.

¹⁸ Arrian VII. 9. 1–10. 7.

¹⁹ Arrian VII. 11. 1.

his Macedonian troops and “in gratitude for this sacrificed to the gods to whom he was wont to sacrifice.”²⁰ He gives a feast in which Macedonians and Persians and others take part and

he himself and his comrades drank from the same bowl and poured the same libations, while the Greek seers and the Magians began the ceremony. And Alexander prayed for all sorts of blessings, and especially for harmony and fellowship in the empire between Macedonians and Persians.²¹

The reference to the presence of the Magians as equal in position with the Greek seers is noteworthy as well as the stress on sacrificing to the gods to whom he was wont to sacrifice, without a specific identification of the divinities. One would assume that the Iranization of Alexander had had a larger dimension than so far recognized.

It is perhaps relevant to note that in Nezami’s *Alexander Romance* one also sees references to the contradiction between the old and the new in the context of religious practices, albeit in a reversed situation to what seems to underlie the accounts in the histories. In Nezami’s book, Alexander orders the Iranians to denounce their Zoroastrianism and revert to their old religion, which is also his religion.

*Sekandar befarmūd ka-Iranian
goshāyand ze ātash-parastī myān
hamān dīn-e dīrīneh rā nov konand
garāyash suī-e dīn-e khosrov konand.*²²

Alexander ordered the Iranians
to untie their girdle of fire-worship

²⁰ Arrian VII. 11, 8; Although this phrase occurs in other places in Arrian as well, it is interesting that in the accounts of the Indian expedition he is apologetic on the issue and needs to qualify it as the gods that Ammon had ordered him, and to “other gods and with different ceremonials” (Arrian VI. 19. 4); cf. Arrian VI. 3. 1, where at the start of sailing down the river Hydaspes, Alexander “sacrificed to the gods according to his custom, and to the river Hydaspes according to the instructions of the seers”, whereas in his *Indica* 18. 11, he qualifies these gods as those whom the prophets had warned him:

And when Alexander had made all these dispositions, he sacrificed to the gods, both the gods of his race, and all of whom the prophets had warned him, and to Poseidon and Amphitrite and the Nereids, and to Ocean himself and to the river Hydaspes, whence he started, and to the Acesines, into which the Hydaspes runs, and to the Indus, into which both run.

cf. A. De Selincourt’s translation of Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Penguin, 1971, pp. 303f., 328, nos. 8, 30; On Clitus see also E.D. Carney, “The death of Clitus”, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* Vol. 22, 1981, p. 159 for an ‘Achilles-like’ mourning in isolation.

²¹ Arrian VII. 10. 8–9; cf. Diodorus XVII. 109. 2–3; Plutarch, *Alexander* 71. 3–5; Curtius X. 11. 12–IV. 1 f. which includes a lengthy praise of the Persians by Alexander as well.

²² Nezami Ganjavi, *Sharafnāma*, ed. V. Dastgerdi, Tehran, 1956, p. 239.

to renew the old religion
to lean towards the king's religion.

Alexander as anti-religion is a recurrent motif in Zoroastrian and some Iranian sources, as we shall later see. The stress on a dispute between the old and the new, as seen in Nezami's passage, would seem to point to the survival of a strand of influence from the sources that had affected the story of Clitus in the histories as well.²³

The three-day period of mourning is observed by Alexander for Hephaestion as well and again during this time "Alexander neither tasted food nor took any care of his health, but lay either moaning or in a sorrowful silence."²⁴ Comparisons have been drawn between Alexander's mourning for Hephaestion and Achilles' mourning for Patrocles.²⁵ While, in terms of outlandish funerals and mourning ceremonies,²⁶ this comparison is valid, with reference to the observance of the three-day period of mourning, the *Iliad* is lacking unless a related relevance would be seen in the thrice march of the armies around Patrocles' body during his funeral,²⁷ or Achilles dragging the body of Hector, harnessed to his chariot, three times around Patrocles' tomb.²⁸ However, it is more likely to see the occurrence of the 'three days' in the sources on Alexander reflecting a Zoroastrian influence, at some stage.

2. *The Boar Motif and its Zoroastrian Relevance*

In the accounts of the mutiny of the pages certain features seem to reflect Iranian influences. Regarding its background, the two sources who relate it in some detail²⁹ report that since Philip's time a custom had been instituted at the Macedonian court according to which the nobilities' sons had to function as personal attendants to the king.³⁰ This tradition has

²³ On the difficulty with the sources in Arrian for this section especially, see A.B. Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander, Studies in Historical Interpretation*, Oxford, 1988, pp. 63 f.

²⁴ Arrian VII. 14. 8 (trans. E.I. Robson, 1929, Vol. 2, p. 253); Bosworth, 1988a, p. 164; Cf. Diodorus XVII. 110. 8; Plutarch, *Alexander* 72; Justin XII. 12. 11.

²⁵ Bosworth, 1988a, p. 164; Arrian VII. 14. 4 'shortening his hair like Achilles'.

²⁶ Arrian VII. 14. 2–10; Plutarch, *Alexander* 72; Justin XII. 12. 11; Diodorus XVII. 110.8; cf. Homer, *The Iliad* 23. 141–995 (trans. R. Fagles, Penguin, 1990, pp. 563–587).

²⁷ *Iliad* 23. 12 (Fagles, p. 559).

²⁸ *Iliad* 24. 19 (Fagles, p. 589).

²⁹ Arrian IV. 13–14; Curtius VIII. 6. 2–8; cf. Plutarch, *Alexander* 55. 2, who merely alludes to it in passing.

³⁰ Arrian IV. 13. 1; cf. Curtius VIII. 6. 2–6.

a somewhat similar precedence in the Persian court which Xenophon includes in the story of Cyrus the Younger's revolt, as:

For all the sons of the noblest Persians are educated at the king's court. There one may learn discretion and self control in full measure, and nothing that is base can be either heard or seen. The boys have before their eyes the spectacle of men honoured by the king and of others dishonoured; they likewise hear of them; and so from earliest boyhood they are learning how to rule and how to submit to rule.³¹

However, in the Macedonian case, as reported especially by Curtius, their duties include some base acts as well; they are treated like slaves and their education is stated in a secondary order.³²

The focus of this study, however, is the episode of the boar hunt involving one of the pages by the name of Hermolaus, a high-born son of the nobility.³³ At the hunt he attacks and kills the charging boar before Alexander can do so.³⁴ This act enrages Alexander who severely punishes the youth: "Alexander was furious at missing his chance, and ordered Hermolaus to be whipped in front of the other boys, and then took his horse from him."³⁵

Boar in Zoroastrian mythology has a special significance. It stands as an avatar of Verethragna, 'god of victory',³⁶ who is the Iranian equivalent of the Greek Heracles, the reputed ancestor of Alexander.³⁷ In the *Avesta*, Verethragna is portrayed as the raging boar who destroys with one stroke.³⁸ The meaning of his name has been noted as "smiting of resistance",³⁹ which one may note is a suitable designation for Alexander as well.

³¹ Xenophon, *Anabasis* I. 9. 3–4.

³² Curtius VIII. 6. 2–6; Arrian IV. 13. 1.

³³ Curtius VIII. 6. 7.

³⁴ Arrian IV. 13. 2; Curtius VIII. 6. 7.

³⁵ Arrian IV. 13. 2 (trans. A. De Selincourt, Penguin, 1971, p. 224); cf. Curtius VIII. 6. 7; See also Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* IV. 6. 3 f. for a precedence at the Assyrian court; Xenophon, *Anabasis* I. 9. 6 for the story of a bear attack and Cyrus' rewarding those who came to his help.

³⁶ Yasht 10. 70; Yasht 14. 15.

³⁷ Curtius IV. 2. 3; Diodorus 17. 1. 5; Plutarch, *Alexander* 2. 1–2; Arrian IV, 11. 6.

³⁸ See n. 36.

³⁹ G. Gnoli, "Bahram, I. In Old and Middle Iranian texts", *Encyclopaedia Iranica* III: 5, 1988, p. 510; Boar hunts as royal pastime occur in the arts of the Sasanian period, for instance in the boar-hunt relief at Taq-i Bostan; see G. Herrmann, *The Iranian Revival*, Oxford, 1977, pp. 132 f.; P.O. Harper, *The Royal Hunter*, New York, 1978, p. 121. During this period several kings were also named *Bahram* and recognized him as their personal patron-deity; see A. Sh. Shahbazi, "Bahram", *Encyclopaedia Iranica* III: 5, 1988, pp. 514 f.; P. Jamzadeh, "II. Representation in Iranian Art", *Encyclopaedia Iranica* III: 5, 1988, pp. 513–514.

In the continuation of the story of the mutiny it is stated that Alexander in responding to the charges of his excesses in Iranizations, as voiced by Hermolaus, and given as the reason for the assassination plot, responds in terms of: "We are coming, not because we are desirous of gold and silver, but to *subdue the whole world*"⁴⁰ (my emphasis). Interestingly this cannot be seen as a correct and valid response to the Greeks' concerns and the stated aims for the campaigns, but rather resembles the function of the god of war and victory. It also bears resemblances to the rhetoric of Darius I, especially where he orders his generals to go forth and subdue the rebellious armies that do not call themselves his.⁴¹

Furthermore, in his defense, Hermolaus also declares that he and his associates had come to kill a king of the Persians, as Alexander now was one.⁴² In the same section a reference to victory also occurs but in a reversed role: Alexander had "made the victors pass under the yoke".⁴³

It may be concluded that the overall sense of the story reveals certain vestiges of the Iranian influences that intrude in the accounts from earlier sources that had included a program of propaganda identifying Alexander with the Iranian god of victory and its relevant imagery.

It is most significant that here too Arrian states that he is relating the story out of its chronological sequence and, furthermore, that there had been many other details reported by *different writers*, but that he had related it as part of the story of Cleitus, since he regards it really akin to Cleitus' story for the purpose of narration.⁴⁴ As noted, the story of Cleitus also included Iranian and Zoroastrian material, probably originating from earlier sources.

3. *The Sogdian Campaign and its Zoroastrian Features*

Included in the accounts of the Sogdian campaign, and especially the capture of a rock, are allusions to a deity of waters whose signs Alexander interprets as support of the gods. At the same time another account, stressing his arrogance, intercedes and portrays him as aspiring to tame Nature and hence the goddess related to the sacred place. Calendrical references

⁴⁰ Curtius VIII. 8. 17.

⁴¹ DB. III. 18 (Kent, pp. 125, 127 f.).

⁴² Curtius VIII. 7. 12.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Arrian IV. 14, 4.

also occur in various points in the accounts. It is perhaps possible to see different sources forming the basis of the reports on this campaign.⁴⁵

The victory over the Sogdian territories proves especially difficult for Alexander. Although much of the Achaemenid empire had been captured, the Sogdian population was still resisting and there were reports of their seeking refuge in the forts against the governor appointed by Alexander.⁴⁶ It is in this situation and in association with his advances in order to subjugate the rebels that an episode is included in the sources that informs of a favourable sign from an Iranian divinity. In the course of frantic digging of wells to reach water, without success, suddenly a spring of water appears in Alexander's tent.⁴⁷ One would see a clear reference to Anahita, the Iranian goddess of waters.⁴⁸ In Arrian's account, the spring emerges near Alexander's tent and there is a spring of oil next to it as well,⁴⁹ which finds Greek interpretations accordingly in relation to Olive Oil.⁵⁰ As Plutarch relates the story, it seems to refer to a liquid with certain similarities to Olive Oil and is taken to be a divine portent indicating a difficult but in the end glorious campaign, "for oil, they said (*i.e.* the seers) was given to men by Heaven as an aid to toil".⁵¹

Anahita's attributes are seen in the context of the same Sogdian campaign again. Curtius states that Alexander had subdued all but for a rock which Ariamazes, a Sogdian held with 30,000 men and provision, for two years. He describes the rock as rising to 30 stadia, with a circuit of 150. It is steep on every side and its only access is by a narrow path. Half way up there is a cave with a narrow and obscure entrance, which inside opens into deep recesses. "*Springs flow almost everywhere in the cavern, and the waters which gather in these send forth a river down the steep sides of the mountain*"⁵² (my emphasis). From Sasanian times places sacred to Anahita with specific features of rocks and water are known. An example is the site

⁴⁵ The problem with the sources has been noted; see especially A.B. Bosworth, "A missing year in the history of Alexander the Great", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 101, 1981, pp. 17–39; *Id.*, 1988a, pp. 112 f.; W.W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great* I, Cambridge, 1948, p. 72; W. Heckel, *Conquests of Alexander the Great*, Cambridge, 2008, p. 105.

⁴⁶ Arrian IV. 15. 7 f.

⁴⁷ Curtius VII. X. 14.

⁴⁸ *Āban Yasht*, trans. J. Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, pt. II, Oxford, 1884, *Sacred Books of the East*, 23, pp. 52 f.

⁴⁹ Arrian IV. 15. 7–8.

⁵⁰ Cf. Plutarch, *Alexander* 57. 4; Strabo XI. 11. 5; Athenaeus II. 42 f.; Bosworth, 1981, p. 23, n. 42.

⁵¹ Plutarch, *Alexander* 57. 5.

⁵² Curtius VII. XI. 1–4.

of Tāq-i Bustān near the city of Kermanshah in western Iran which boasts of grottos in the rocky mountain next to a spring of water that forms into a lake and then a river that flows down stream towards the city. Several Sasanian kings have their sculptures on the rocks, including an investiture by Ahura Mazda and Anahita.⁵³ The site is believed to have been especially sacred to Anahita, with its predominant water associations.⁵⁴

Curtius' account continues with Alexander's determination to conquer even Nature itself.⁵⁵ This may be seen as reaffirming the sacred nature of the spot in representing the goddess of waters. At the same time it recalls a Scythian envoy's admonitions of Alexander advising him to curb his greed, for "when you have subdued the whole human race, you will wage war with the woods and the snows, with rivers and wild beasts".⁵⁶

The rock is eventually captured and the rebels surrender.⁵⁷ Among these is Roxana, a local nobility's daughter, with whom Alexander is said to have fallen in love and married.⁵⁸ However, Curtius' account includes another battle with the natural forces before the eventual surrender of the Sogdian rebels. It takes place in the course of a campaign against a region called Gazaba. The first day of march is quiet and easy. The second day is still not stormy and gloomy, but somewhat darker. However, on the third day of the march, they encounter an extraordinary phenomenon of lightening flashing all over the heavens, and the light alternately sparkling and fading, thus bringing terror to the hearts and eyes of the marching men. The continuous peal of thunder and lightning bolts stuns and deafens the army into a standstill. It is followed by a torrential shower of hail. At first they withstand this under cover of their shields, but soon their hands are frozen and unable to hold their slippery weapons. They do not know which way to run for the storm meets them with a greater violence wherever they turn. The army breaks up and men wander aimlessly in the woods. Many are overwhelmed by fear before they surrender to fatigue and throw themselves on the frozen ground. Others lean against trees, but they know they are choosing a place to die, for their inactive bodies would freeze. The grievous torment persists with violence and the light

⁵³ Dorothy Shepherd, "Sasanian Art", *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 3: 2, *The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 1085–1089.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1087.

⁵⁵ Curtius VII. XI. 5.

⁵⁶ Curtius VII. VIII. 13.

⁵⁷ Curtius VII. XI. 5–29.

⁵⁸ Arrian IV. 19. 5; cf. Curtius VIII. IV. 21–29; Metz Epitome 28–31, *apud* Heckel & Yardley, 2004, p. 202.

the nature's solace is obscured by the woods and the storm that is as dark as night.⁵⁹

Of special interest in this report is the emphasis on light and the lightning that dazzled the eyes and terrified.⁶⁰ One wonders if there is a connection with Roxana's name.⁶¹ In the *Shāhnāma*, she is Darius' daughter and referred to as 'light of the world'.⁶²

A significant recurring number in the accounts of the Sogdian campaign is the various references to number '30'. In Curtius' account, Roxana enters the banquet given by her father, Oxyartes the satrap for Alexander among thirty high-born maidens.⁶³ Earlier in the report, there is the story of the thirty prisoners of the Sogdiani, of noble birth and extraordinary strength of body who, on their way to execution, sing a song as if rejoicing.⁶⁴ The rock's height is 30 stadia, and Ariamazes holds it with 30,000 armed men.⁶⁵ Those who surrender send thirty of their leading men to do so.⁶⁶ In Arrian's account, thirty of Alexander's men lose their lives in trying to climb the rock. They fall in the snow and their bodies are not recovered for burial, while the rest reach the top as dawn is breaking and wave linen flags to the Macedonians below, as the sign of their success.⁶⁷ It is interesting that the 30th day of the Zoroastrian calendar is 'endless light'.⁶⁸ It is possible to see an account with overtly Iranian elements forming the basis of the histories. Its purpose had been to portray Alexander as the righteous figure who enjoys the support of Iranian divinities. The gift of the spring of water is clear. While there are also traces of a later account in opposition to the first one that sees Alexander as setting out to conquer even nature and capture the rock sacred to the goddess, and whose beloved wife is the 30th among her equals in the area, but who has associations with the natural elements and calendrical references as well.

In the context of the accounts of the Sogdian campaign, one may also note two perfectly preserved Iranian place names, which may be another indication of the existence of an Iranian version. Arrian mentions the city

⁵⁹ Curtius VIII. IV. 2–9.

⁶⁰ Curtius VIII. IV. 3.

⁶¹ *Avestan Raoxshna*, 'light'; see *Borhan-i Qatib*, ed. M. Moein, Vol. II, Tehran, 1978, p. 977.

⁶² *Shāhnāma*, Moscow, Vol. VII, 1968, p. 25.

⁶³ Curtius VIII. IV. 21–23.

⁶⁴ Curtius VII. X. 4.

⁶⁵ Curtius VII. XI. 1–2.

⁶⁶ Curtius VII. XI. 26.

⁶⁷ Arrian IV. 19. 2–3.

⁶⁸ M. Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism*, Manchester, 1984, p. 19.

of Zariaspa,⁶⁹ 'golden horse' (*zari* > Av. *zaranya* 'gold' + Av. *aspa* 'horse').⁷⁰ Arrian also has Bagae 'a stronghold of Sogdiana',⁷¹ in which can be recognized Old Persian *baga* 'god' and Avestan *baga* 'lot, good fortune'.⁷² Moreover, it is important to state that in the same accounts the survival of an Achaemenid military institution and its related archive has been identified.⁷³

4. Iranian and Zoroastrian Features of Hephaestion's Funeral

At Ecbatana, and during a grand festival lasting several days with athletic games, literary contests and theatres in which 3,000 artists from Greece took part, Alexander lost his most dear friend Hephaestion, due to illness or immoderations.⁷⁴ His mourning as recorded in various sources was extensive and comprehensive in terms of incorporating customs of the peoples of the empire, especially those of the Iranians. In this mixture what seem to specifically stand out as Iranian is the already noted observation of the three days of abstinence,⁷⁵ the tradition of shortening the manes and tails of horses⁷⁶ also attested by Herodotus⁷⁷ and the *Shāhnāma*⁷⁸ and an edict with regard to the sacred fire, recorded only by Diodorus:

he proclaimed to all the peoples of Asia that they should sedulously quench what the Persians call the sacred fire, until such time as the funeral should be ended. This was the custom of the Persians when their kings died, and people thought that the order was an ill omen, and that heaven was foretelling the king's own death.⁷⁹

This has generally been interpreted as 'putting out the fire' on the occasion of a king's death, to be followed by the installation of a new fire on

⁶⁹ Arrian IV. 1. 5, IV. 16. 5, 6.

⁷⁰ Cf. Kent, pp. 173, 189; Frye, 1984, p. 181.

⁷¹ Arrian IV. 17. 4.

⁷² Cf. Kent, p. 199; Moein, 1978, Vol. I, pp. 288–289, n. 6.

⁷³ Briant, pp. 748 f.

⁷⁴ Arrian VII. 14. 1; Plutarch, *Alexander* 72. 1; Justin XII. 12; Diodorus XVII. 110. 8; Curtius' account is lost for this section.

⁷⁵ Arrian VII. 14. 8; cf. *Shāyast lā-Shāyast* XVII. 2; see above chapter VIII on Cleitus.

⁷⁶ Plutarch, *Alexander* 72. 2.

⁷⁷ Herodotus IX. 24; cf. Plutarch, *Aristides* XIV. 6.

⁷⁸ Ed. J. Mohl, Vol. 5, Tehran, 1989, p. 1484.

⁷⁹ Diodorus XVII. 114. 4.

the coronation of his successor.⁸⁰ However, a number of difficulties arise from this interpretation. In the first place, there is no evidence for the installation of the fire of a new king or, for that matter, any other record of the extinguishing the fire on the king's death. The same Alexander histories report on Darius' death and Alexander giving him a royal funeral and entombment at his ancestral burial place.⁸¹ A ceremony of fire is not included in the reports. While what survives of the Achaemenids' art manifestly underlines their desire for a display of dynastic continuity, rather than each king's expressions of individuality.

Furthermore, one should also take into consideration the Zoroastrian literature and customs, which do not support the understanding from Diodorus' text but on the contrary negate that understanding. Perhaps it is possible to examine these issues further and draw a different conclusion.

Regarding the investiture of an Achaemenid king, the only extant account is that of Plutarch for Artaxerxes II,⁸² which shows the exaltation of their dynastic continuity through their relationship with Cyrus.⁸³ It is also important to note that this report does not mention a fire ceremony, despite the fact that the location is a temple. It is difficult to imagine that such a politically important rite would have been kept secret and known only to "those present".⁸⁴ Even if by the dictates of ritual purity, only a select group could participate or be present at the ceremony, nevertheless it would have been heralded around the empire and stated by Plutarch as well.

However, what is known of the Achaemenid customs with regards to the fire shows a stress on an outward and public emphasis on dynastic continuity. The image of the king exalting the fire forms a central position on the facade of his tomb, which is repeated for every Achaemenid

⁸⁰ Briant, p. 522; Boyce, 1991, p. 17.

⁸¹ Arrian III. 22. 1; Diodorus XVII. 73. 2; Plutarch, *Alexander* 43. 3; Justin XI. 15.

⁸² Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 3. 1–2:

It was not long after the decease of Darius that the king, his successor, went to Pasargadae, to have the ceremony of his inauguration consummated by the Persian priests. There is a temple dedicated to a warlike goddess, whom one might liken to Minerva, into which when the royal person to be initiated has passed, he must strip himself of his own robe, and put on that which Cyrus the first wore before he was king; then, having devoured a frail of figs, he must eat turpentine, and drink a cup of sour milk. To which if they superadd any other rites, it is unknown to any but those that are present at them.

cf. Briant, p. 523.

⁸³ Briant, p. 523.

⁸⁴ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 3. 2.

king from Darius I onwards.⁸⁵ Furthermore, it has been established that the fire altar represented on the tombs is similar to what is believed to have been used by Cyrus during a similar ceremony.⁸⁶ Such evidence would only underline the perpetuation of the tradition and inform that if the fire is that of the king, it is meant to be seen as dynastic. Although the other possibility is that the fire stands as a religious icon and represents the king's Zoroastrianism.⁸⁷ At the same time it is important to note that the Sasanians had also represented the image of fire on their coins as installed on a throne with specific Achaemenid design.⁸⁸ For them it seems that the fire of the Achaemenids could be claimed as standing as the predecessor to that of their line. Such evidence points to a culture of dynastic continuity through the sacred fire whose survival was held to span centuries in an unbroken line. In the face of such testimony it is difficult to accommodate a parallel tradition of individual fires of each king as well and see each being 'quenched' and shortly after newly installed. Moreover, the Zoroastrian practices, as stated in the texts and observed in extant customs, also only inform of a culture of upholding the ever-burning fire, and severe punishments for otherwise. An example of this is seen in the *Ātash Nyāyish*, an ancient text embodying verses from the *Gāthās*.⁸⁹ Two verses are of special significance for our argument:

Mayest thou burn in this house. Mayest thou ever burn in this house. Mayest thou blaze in this house. Mayest thou increase in this house. Even for a long time, till the powerful restoration of the world, till the time of the good, powerful restoration of the world⁹⁰

and:

we gladden by our virtues thy mighty Fire, O Ahura. Thy most quick and powerful Fire, who shows his assistance to him who has ever comforted him, but delights in taking vengeance with his hands on the man who has harmed him.⁹¹

⁸⁵ E.F. Schmidt, *Persepolis III, the Royal Tombs and other Monuments*, Chicago, 1970, pp. 85 f., pls. 19 f.

⁸⁶ D. Stronach, "Urartian and Achaemenian tower temples", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 26, 1976, p. 287; *Id.*, *Pasargadae*, Oxford, 1978, pp. 141, 145.

⁸⁷ M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. II, Leiden, 1982, p. 113.

⁸⁸ I. Pfeiler, "Der Thron der Achaimeniden als Herrschaftssymbol auf Sasanidischen Munzen", *Schweizer Münzblätter* XXIII: 91, 1973, pp. 107 f.

⁸⁹ Boyce, 1975, p. 272.

⁹⁰ *Ātash Nyāyash* 9, trans. J. Darmesteter, Oxford, 1884, *Sacred Books of the East* 23, p. 359.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 18, p. 361.

The Pahlavi *Shāyast lā-Shāyast* VII. 9 also states: "Whoever shall extinguish (literally kill) a fire, by him ten fires are to be gathered together, by him ten punishments are to be endured."⁹² And also in XX. 15: "Fire is not to be extinguished, for this is a sin."⁹³

Furthermore, from the Pahlavi Zoroastrian book of *Bundahishn*, we learn about the fire of the king, established by various ancient mythological kings. However, the idea is that each one was supposed to burn forever and be kept alive by subsequent generations. It is only with regret that the information on some having been extinguished during the Islamic period is reported.⁹⁴

In the Sasanian period referring to the fire of kings served for marking the time. Evidence of an inscription of Shāpūr I shows that during his reign the fire of his father was still presumed as burning and referred to as in a continuum, despite his own demise. The inscription has: "forty years of the fire of Ardashir, twenty-four years of the fire of Shāpūr",⁹⁵ bearing in mind that Ardashir had only ruled sixteen years (224–240 AD).⁹⁶ Seemingly during his son's 24th year of rule, his own fire was still burning, living on and counted as gaining age and continuing through time. The idea is similar to that seen in *Bundahishn*.

Furthermore, while the inscription on the reverse of early Sasanian coins has the word 'fire' followed by each king's name,⁹⁷ the image of the fire enthroned on an altar with Achaemenid throne-leg design⁹⁸ indicates a deliberate allusion to the idea of continuity of the royal fire, descending from the fire of the Achaemenids. Hence, here too the evidence speaks against the assumption of 'quenching' the fire.

⁹² Trans. E.W. West, *Pahlavi Texts*, pt. I, Oxford, 1880, *Sacred Books of the East* 5, p. 300.

⁹³ *Sacred Books of the East* 5, p. 396; See also *The Book of Arda Viraf*, 37, 55. 5, for extinguishing a fire considered a sin, trans. M. Haug & E.W. West, Amsterdam, 1971, ppl. Lxvi, lxxi, 177, 184.

⁹⁴ GBd. XVIII. 18–22, *Zand-Ākāsīh, Iranian or Greater Bundahishn*, trans. B.T. Anklesaria, Bombay, 1956, p. 163.

⁹⁵ E. Bickerman, "Time-Reckoning", *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 3:2, *The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*, ed. E. Yarshater, Cambridge, 1983, p. 783; R.N. Frye, "The Political History of Iran under the Sasanians", *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 3: 1, 1983, pp. 117 f.; R. Ghirshman, "Inscription du monument de Chapour Ier a Chapour", *Révue des Arts asiatiques* 10, 1937, pp. 123–129.

⁹⁶ Frye, 1983, p. 178; *Id.*, *The History of Ancient Iran*, Munich, 1984, pp. 291 f., 294.

⁹⁷ R. Göbl, "Sasanian coins", *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 3: 1, 1983, p. 331.

⁹⁸ Pfeiler, 1973, pp. 107 f.; P. Jamzadeh, *The Achaemenid Throne: Its Significance and its Legacy*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1991, pp. 23–24; *Id.*, "The Achaemenid throne-leg design", *Iranica Antiqua* 31, 1996, pp. 124–128.

Extant Zoroastrian practices also inform of the careful measures taken to protect the sacred fire, while its protection against demons had been sought in the event of someone's death.⁹⁹ Of special interest is the rite of 'exalting the fire' for the dead, in order to compensate on their behalf for any transgressions against fire during their life time.¹⁰⁰

Zoroastrian texts as well as extant practices also tell us of the importance of protecting the fire from the pollution of death.¹⁰¹ They also state that the more righteous a person, the more dangerously polluting his corpse would become after death.¹⁰² In this regard it is most interesting to note that one can learn from Zoroastrian texts the fact that ashes of the sacred fire can function as protective clothing against pollutants.¹⁰³

Therefore, in light of the above arguments, is it not possible to imagine that Alexander in exalting his beloved friend was in fact presenting him to the Persians as a 'righteous man'—as a king would have been conceptualized—and as such instructing them of the necessary measures with regard to the sacred fires "until such time as the funeral should be ended"?¹⁰⁴ Is he not telling them to sedulously cover their sacred fires for the duration of the funeral, rather than kill the fire? In doing this he is asking the Persians to honour Hephaestion as a king and act as they would at the time of a king's death. That is why the Persians regard this as a bad omen, foretelling of the king's own death.¹⁰⁵ In the same light one would view Alexander's asking the temple of Ammon in Egypt to regard Hephaestion as a god.¹⁰⁶ In other words the Egyptians are also asked to honour Hephaestion as they would their kings and give him divine status. It is interesting that Diodorus before reporting on Alexander's outlandish funeral for Hephaestion, includes in his account Alexander's reception of delegates from various parts of the world, during which he first receives

⁹⁹ M. Boyce, *A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism*, Oxford, 1977, pp. 45, 59, 75 f., 149, 152, 192, 225.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 186 f.

¹⁰¹ *Shāyast lā-Shāyast* II. 38, *Sacred Books of the East* 5, p. 255; II. 45–46, pp. 257–258; Boyce, 1977, p. 149.

¹⁰² *Shāyast lā-Shāyast* II. 38, *Sacred Books of the East* 5, p. 255; Boyce, 1977, p. 162; Boyce, 1975, p. 301; cf. *Vendidad* V. 36.

¹⁰³ *Shāyast lā-Shāyast* II. 49, *Sacred Books of the East* 5, pp. 258, 282, n. 8.

¹⁰⁴ Diodorus XVII. 114. 4; Prof. Phillip Harding kindly informs me that although the verb used means 'quench', in the sense of putting out a fire, it is possible that Diodorus had misunderstood what was being done.

¹⁰⁵ Diodorus XVII. 114. 4.

¹⁰⁶ Arrian VII. 14. 7; Diodorus XVII. 115. 6.

those on religious matters.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps this council could also have further advised him of the ways he could honour Hephaestion according to various subject people's customs and beliefs, although his familiarity with Iranian practices pre-date this incident and as already noted had been manifestly demonstrated on various occasions. Nevertheless, Diodorus' mention of the reception of delegations at this time is significant, the period which, according to various other reports, had been consumed with unproportionate grief bordering on insanity.¹⁰⁸ At the same time it is significant that Arrian credits the report on Alexander's three days of abstinence from food to reliable sources,¹⁰⁹ amidst a profusion of reports, some based on ill-intentions towards Hephaestion and Alexander.¹¹⁰ Perhaps one can see his observation of the three days as somewhat more personalized and reflecting his own tendencies at this time and harmonized with the efforts to protect the sacred fire, according to the Persians' religion. In the same light one would note the fact that, according to Arrian, Alexander had "commanded mourning to be made over all the East",¹¹¹ while there is no mention of Greece or Macedonia, Hephaestion's homeland and Alexander's primary base of power. Diodorus' account of 'quenching' the fire may have been influenced by the Greek practice of purifying polluted fires by extinguishing them and kindling new ones.¹¹² Hence the implicit importance of his report would seem to be 'protection from pollution' which in Iranian conception was associated with death.

¹⁰⁷ Diodorus XVII. 113. 1–3; cf. Arrian VII. 15. 4–5 who does not mention 'religion' but signifies it as identifying Alexander as "lord of all the earth and sea"; Justin XII. 13; cf. Bosworth, 1988a, p. 166.

¹⁰⁸ Arrian VII. 14. 2–4; Plutarch, *Alexander* 72. 2–3; Cf. Aelian, *Historical Miscellany* 7. 8: When Hephaestion died Alexander threw armour on to his pyre, and clothing much prized by the Persians. He cut off his own hair, a gesture in the Homeric manner, in imitation of the poet's Achilles. But Alexander was more violent and hotheaded than Achilles: he destroyed the acropolis of Ecbatana and knocked down its walls. As far as his hair is concerned, I think he acted in accordance with Greek custom; but when he pulled down the walls, that was a barbaric expression of grief by Alexander. He changed his dress and allowed himself to be completely controlled by anger, love and tears. (my emphasis)

ed. & trans. N.G. Wilson (Loeb), 1997, p. 251. Here one may see an echo from Darius I's stress on 'control of anger' (DNb. 13–15, Kent, p. 140) and Alexander's failure in this respect. Furthermore, it is significant that according to this account his mourning takes place in two traditions: Greek and Persian.

¹⁰⁹ Arrian VII. 14. 8.

¹¹⁰ Arrian VII. 14. 2.

¹¹¹ Arrian VII. 14. 9.

¹¹² Plutarch, *Aristides* XX. 4–5, interestingly the pollution is due to the presence of Iranians in the course of Xerxes' invasion.

However, Diodorus' report of the necessary measures is given in Greek terms and coloured by his understanding of the required rites.

One may also note Pausanis' eye-witness account of fire priests in Lydia "miraculously" creating a fire out of the ashes on an altar.¹¹³ This is probably another instance of a dormant fire, for some reason, protected under the ashes.

Strabo also informs of the Magi of Cappadocia keeping the fire ever burning on an altar with a large quantity of ashes.¹¹⁴

Perhaps it is possible to assume that Diodorus' account¹¹⁵ originates from an original ancient Persian text. This would have stated the 'clothing/covering'¹¹⁶ of the sacred fires, with the Greek translation of this text being influenced by the Greek practice of 'quenching' the fires when protection against pollution had demanded it. The Greek practice had come to relate the Iranian tradition regarding the protection of the sacred fire against pollution.

¹¹³ Pausanias V. 27. 5–6; Cf. Boyce-Grenet, 1991, p. 514, n. 50, noting Pausanias' ascription of this phenomenon to the Magi's magical arts.

¹¹⁴ Strabo 15. 3. 15.

¹¹⁵ Diodorus 17. 114. 4.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Pahlavi *nihuftan*, D.N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, London, 1986, p. 60.

CHAPTER NINE

IRANIAN ECHOES IN MUTINY'S ACCOUNTS

An important facet of Alexander's Iranization policy which at a point becomes paramount for his success is the reform of his army. Although based on some of the sources, the intent seems to be the creation of a new force that relies on the strengths of the two forces: Macedonian and Iranian. Yet what survives also shows Alexander's stronger inclination towards the Iranians, which leads to the alienation of the Macedonians, their 'mutiny' and eventual submission to Alexander's will and the acceptance of the changes.¹ Alexander's response to the crisis, his manner and speeches, all reveal glimpses of Zoroastrian and Iranian influences. The rhetorics of Darius I also play a leading role and intervene in the accounts.

The reforms in the army become manifest at Susa with the arrival of the *Epigoni*, 'Successors', a force of 30,000 young men of the same age recruited from various provinces and "trained to warlike exercises on the Macedonian system".² Curtius states the purpose as "intending to have them at once as hostages and as soldiers".³ However, in Arrian's report, they are viewed as a potential threat by the Macedonians: "Their arrival is said to have annoyed the Macedonians, as if Alexander were contriving every means of dispensing with Macedonians in future."⁴ This information comes in the long list of grievances all stemming from Alexander's Iranization policies.⁵ His reform of the army also entails the inclusion of various other groups from the Iranian provinces into the Macedonian army. A companions' cavalry is named and characterized as "those who seemed conspicuous for handsomeness or some other excellence".⁶

His next decisive move takes place at Opis, where he announces the discharge of a part of the army, those Macedonians who had become too

¹ Plutarch, *Alexander* 71.

² Arrian VII. 6. 1; cf. Curtius VIII. 5. 1; Plutarch, *Alexander* 47. 3; Diodorus XVII. 108 "all very young and selected for their bodily grace and strength".

³ Curtius VIII. 5. 1.

⁴ Arrian VII. 6. 2; cf. Plutarch, *Alexander* 71; Diodorus XVII. 108. 3: "capable of serving as a counter-balance to the Macedonian phalanx".

⁵ Arrian VII. 6. 2–5.

⁶ *Ibid.* VII. 6. 3, trans. E.I. Robson, 1933, p. 221.

old, or disabled. They are to receive such rewards as to become objects of great envy at home.⁷ As Arrian states, Alexander's intentions are benevolent and meant to flatter the Macedonians, but their understanding of the move is different, thinking they are despised and as such replaced by the Persians. Their judgement of the situation is based on the culmination of Alexander's actions. "He caused them indignation frequently by his Persian dress which seemed to point the same way, and the Macedonian equipment of the Oriental 'Successors', and the importation of cavalry of foreign tribes into the ranks of the companions."⁸ As a result, they all band together and facing Alexander request the release of every Macedonian, "bade him carry on war with the help of his sire (by which title they hinted slightly at Ammon)".⁹ Alexander's response is swift and decisive and, as Arrian states, influenced by his recent Oriental habits. "He leapt down from the platform with the officers that were about him, and bade them arrest the foremost of those who had disturbed the multitude, himself with his finger pointing out to the guards whom they were to arrest; they were in number thirteen. These he ordered to be marched off to die."¹⁰ He then remounts the platform and addresses the dazed and silent troops. He tells them if they wish to leave they can do so but should take into consideration his treatment of them and vice versa. He gives a short history of his rule, starting with that of his father, whom he credits with virtually civilizing the Macedonians and transforming them from helpless vagabonds, dressed in sheepskins and pasturing a few sheep on the mountains, into city dwellers with *laws and customs*¹¹ (my emphasis). While history of Macedonia credits Philip with military expansions,¹² no mention of his laws are included. However, this is a feature of Achaemenid rule. It is the Achaemenid king, especially Darius I who in his inscriptions speaks of his 'law', O.P. *dāta*, that held the countries under his rule firm.¹³

⁷ *Ibid.* VII. 8. 1; cf. Plutarch, *Alexander* 71. 2: "Therefore when he also sent the weak and maimed among them down to the sea-board, they said it was insult and abuse, after using men up in every kind of service, now to put them away in disgrace and cast them back upon their native cities and their parents, no longer the men they were when he took them."

⁸ Arrian VII. 8. 2.

⁹ Arrian VII. 8. 3; cf. Diodorus XVII. 108. 3; Justin XII. 11. 6.

¹⁰ Arrian VII. 8. 3; cf. Diodorus XVII. 109. 2.

¹¹ Arrian VII. 9. 1–2.

¹² Justin VII. 6; Diodorus XVI.

¹³ DNa 21, Kent, pp. 137–138; cf. DB I. 20–24, Kent, pp. 119, 189; Briant, p. 125; M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. II, Leiden, 1982, p. 121.

Darius' law also applies to a situation of rebellion. In his tomb inscription Darius I addressing his subjects concludes: "Let not the laws be disobeyed by thee. Let not anyone be untrained in obedience. O menial, let not the king feel himself obliged to inflict punishment for wrong-doing on the dwellers in the land."¹⁴

Alexander continues the history of his father's rule with the enumeration of his military victories over the neighbouring lands, thus making "the high road into Greece broad and easy for you, whereas it had been narrow and difficult".¹⁵ It is interesting that in Zoroastrian texts on the afterlife, the road to heaven for the blessed is crossing over the bridge that for them becomes broad and safe, while for the damned is as narrow as a blade-edge causing their fall into hell.¹⁶

Previously it was noted that mixed with the accounts of Alexander's advances towards Persia is included a description resembling that of Zoroastrian hell.¹⁷ Here we seem to have a counter-balance. The Macedonians' advances towards Greece have been described as those of the righteous going to heaven, according to the Zoroastrian system.

Alexander continues his history with the account of his own exploits—incidentally including his father's debts and his own borrowing to fund the campaigns.¹⁸ He defines his victories as: "I lead you conquerors through every land, every sea, every river, mountain, plain."¹⁹ This also interestingly approximates Darius' designation of his empire in terms of their natural geographical characters: "mountains and plains, from this side of the Bitter River and from the other side of the Bitter River, from this side of the parched land and from the other side of the parched land."²⁰ Now

¹⁴ DNb 58–60, Kent, p. 140; cf. Briant, pp. 510 f. for the frequent mention of the O.P. word, 'dāta', 'law' in the *Book of Esther*; the word occurs in Xerxes' inscription as well: XPh. 49, 52, Kent, p. 152; Briant, p. 178.

¹⁵ Arrian VII. 9. 3–4.

¹⁶ Dinkard IX. 19. 3, trans. E.W. West *Sacred Books of the East* 37, p. 210; *Dadistan-i Dinik* XXI. 2–7, trans. E.W. West, *Sacred Books of the East* 18, pp. 48–49; J. Darmesteter, trans. *The Zend-Avesta*, pt. I, *The Vendidad*, 1887, Oxford, pp. 212 f., n. 3; M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. I, Leiden, 1975, pp. 116 f., 237 f.; cf. Polyaeus. 4. 2. 8 for an account of Philip capturing the narrow passes held by the Athenians and Thebans, by a trick of sending a messenger through the pass carrying a letter with false information, in order for the letter to be captured, read and believed (*Stratagems of War*, trans. P. Krentz & E.L. Wheeler, Vol. I, Chicago, 1994, p. 321).

¹⁷ See chapter III on 'Campaign for Persia'.

¹⁸ Arrian VII. 9. 6.

¹⁹ Arrian VII. 10. 2.

²⁰ DPg., Briant, p. 179; Schmidt, *Persepolis I*, 1953, pp. 32, 62 f.; Olmstead, 1948, p. 175.

that empire is Alexander's, he might as well inherit and use the propaganda of his predecessors appropriately.

He continues his address by reminding them of the cancellation of their debts, his honouring their fallen comrades by splendid memorials and benefits for their survivors,²¹ and states that his intention was to release those no longer fit for campaign, with honours that would make them objects of envy at home. Since they all wished to go, they should not fail to make it clear that they have deserted their king Alexander. The king who had made them victors over Persians, Medes, Bactrians... (a list of the former Achaemenid territories follows), adding that he was ready to take them further. However, they are leaving him to the wild tribes that they had conquered. He then states: "this, when you declare it, will be, no doubt, glorious among men, and pious in the sight of heaven".²²

The final line, considering the merits of one's actions in the two worlds, also finds parallels in the Achaemenid inscriptions. Darius I in the fifth and final column of his Behistun inscription advises: "Whoso shall worship Ahuramazda, divine blessing will be upon him, both while living and when dead."²³ The idea is elaborated by Xerxes:

Thou who shalt be hereafter, if thou shalt think, "Happy may I be when living, and when dead may I be blessed" have respect for that law which Ahuramazda has established; worship Ahuramazda and Arta reverently. The man who has respect for that law which Ahuramazda has established, and worships Ahuramazda and Arta reverently, he both becomes happy while living, and becomes blessed when dead.²⁴

Alexander following his speech leaps down from the platform, shutting himself up in the palace for three days,²⁵ an act which, as noted, has similarities with a Zoroastrian observation.²⁶ On the third day he meets with a select group of Persians, giving them commands of different brigades and permitting those who were now his kinsmen to give him the customary kiss.²⁷ During this period the Macedonian force is silent, immobile and probably undecided, but on learning of the Persians' appointments and formations of new squadrons they react and "running all together to the

²¹ Arrian VII. 10. 3–4.

²² Arrian VII. 10. 5–7.

²³ DB V. 18–20, Kent, p. 134.

²⁴ XPh. 46–56; cf. Briant, pp. 551 f.

²⁵ Arrian VII. 11. 1.

²⁶ See chapter VIII on Clitus.

²⁷ Arrian VII. 11. 1 f.

palace they threw their arms before the doors as signs of supplication to the king; they themselves standing shouting before the doors begging to be let in".²⁸ On hearing of this, Alexander comes out and meets them in an emotional reunion full of tears.²⁹ One of the men voices their grievance as "This, o king, is what grieves the Macedonians, that you have made Persians your kinsmen and Persians are called 'Alexander's kinsmen', and they are permitted to kiss you; but no Macedonian has tasted this privilege."³⁰ His response is that he regards them all as his kinsmen, and from hence on he will call them that. One of the men going forward, kisses him, followed by any other who wished to kiss the king. "And thus they took up their arms again and returned shouting and singing their victory song to the camp."³¹ It is significant to note that although the conflict is finally resolved to the Macedonians' satisfaction, it is done so according to the Persians' criteria. It is the Persians' custom that has prevailed over Alexander and his men. They now recognize each other as kinsmen, based on the Persian tradition, and kiss each other as relatives. Herodotus (I. 134) had stated:

When Persians meet in the streets one can always tell by their mode of greeting whether or not they are of the same rank; for they so not speak but kiss—their equals upon the mouth, those somewhat superior on the cheeks. A man of greatly inferior rank prostrates himself in profound reverence.³²

Based on this evidence one would assume that Alexander's Persian kinsmen were regarded as his equals. Furthermore, in the same frame of reference, his relationship with the Macedonians is re-defined.

Previously it was argued that this episode seems to see Alexander reborn as a Persian following his three days of seclusion, as if in mourning.³³ The evidence discussed here further enhances that conclusion.

In gratitude Alexander sacrifices to

the gods to whom he was wont to sacrifice, and gave a general feast, sitting himself there, and all the Macedonians sitting round him; and then next to them Persians, and next any of the other tribes who had precedence in reputation or any other quality, and he himself and his comrades drank from the same bowl and poured the same libations, while the Greek seers

²⁸ Arrian VII. 11. 2–4; Diodorus XVII. 109. 3; *cf.* Bosworth, 1988a, p. 160.

²⁹ Arrian VII. 11. 4–5.

³⁰ Arrian VII. 11. 6.

³¹ Arrian VII. 11. 7.

³² Trans. A. De Selincourt/A.R. Burns, Penguin, 1980, p. 97.

³³ See chapter VIII on Clitus.

and the Magians began the ceremony. And Alexander prayed for all sorts of blessings, and especially for harmony and fellowship in the empire between Macedonians and Persians. They say that those who shared the feast were nine thousand, and that they all poured the same libation and thereat sang the one song of victory.³⁴

The presence of the Magi as equals to the Greek priests in this ceremony is significant, as is the format of the placing of the guests. In an earlier study it was suggested that this format approximates the design of Persepolis in regard to the position of various people and nations represented in the reliefs. The king forms the center. Next come his Persian and Median nobles, and others follow based on their importance in the empire, and proximity to *Pārsa*/Persia, represented as the entire complex of Persepolis as well.³⁵

In Curtius' account, a number of points are of interest and reveal important Iranian influences. Alexander reforms his army incorporating Persian forces, whose discipline and loyalty he admires.³⁶ For this process he dismisses parts of his Macedonian force, selecting some to remain. The criteria in his report seems to be the soldiers' 'debts'. "But before selecting those whom he intended to retain, he ordered all the soldiers to make a declaration of their debts. He had learned that many had heavy indebtedness."³⁷ It would seem that the Persian value of 'fearing debt'³⁸ plays a role, although it is not clear who the creditors are and why parts of the victorious army that so far has plundered all the treasuries of Asia has to borrow to maintain its keep. Perhaps it is possible that here too we are witnessing a rhetorical discussion drawn up on the Persian index of values.

In support of this hypothesis comes Curtius' report that news of selection led to unrest among men, "thinking that he would establish the permanent seat of his kingdom in Asia".³⁹ Seemingly the problem evolves around Alexander's change of heart and his inclinations towards Iranians and their ways. Perhaps the story of the soldiers' debts had also originated from the same sources, seeking to justify the dismissals. This point is focused upon later. Alexander is impressed by the Persians' discipline

³⁴ Arrian VII. II. 8–9.

³⁵ P. Jamzadeh, "Achaemenid girding in Zoroastrian and Iranian contexts", *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute* 62, 1998, p. 15; *Id.*, "The Apadana stairway reliefs and the metaphor of conquest", *Iranica Antiqua* 27, 1992, pp. 125–47; *Id.*, "Darius' Thrones: temporal and eternal", *Iranica Antiqua* 30, 1995, pp. 1–21.

³⁶ Curtius X. III. 10.

³⁷ Curtius X. II. 9; cf. Diodorus XVII. 109. 2.

³⁸ Herodotus I. 136.

³⁹ Curtius X. II. 12.

and their immunity towards luxurious living,⁴⁰ which his Macedonians have succumbed to despite their former simple life styles.⁴¹

What is of special interest here is the intrusion of certain lines from the inscriptions of Darius I into Alexander's addresses to his men, following their unrest and demand that they all should be discharged.

Prevented by neither the rebukes of their officers nor by respect for the king, with rebellious shouts and military violence they interrupted Alexander when he wished to speak, and openly declared that they would move a step from there in no direction except towards their native land.⁴²

Alexander finally finds a chance to speak and questions their motive: "What does this sudden disturbance and such insolent and furious lawlessness threaten?"⁴³ And further on "Undoubtedly there is some deeper evil which turns you all from me".⁴⁴ This remark resonates like Darius I's arguments in identifying a specific evil, exemplified as 'Lie'—the evil of Lie—as the main force behind rebellion,⁴⁵ specifically the statement: "The Lie made them rebellious".⁴⁶ Alexander's next sentence also finds a close Persian precedence. He continues, "For when has a whole army abandoned its king?"⁴⁷ In the same inscription Darius I refers to the rebellious armies as those who have broken from him or do not call themselves his: "Go forth, smite that army which does not call itself mine."⁴⁸

Alexander's reproaches continue and at some point echo what also Arrian reports⁴⁹ in giving himself and his father Philip all the credit for Macedonians' rise.⁵⁰ Finally Curtius reports his identifying the thirteen ring leaders⁵¹ and states: "Who would have believed that an assemblage recently so savage was paralysed by sudden fear",⁵² and further on: "Whether veneration for the mere name, since nations which live under kings honour their kings among the gods, or a particular veneration for Alexander himself, or the confidence with which he exercised his authority

⁴⁰ Curtius X. III. 9 f.

⁴¹ Curtius X. II. 22 f.

⁴² Curtius X. II. 13.

⁴³ Curtius X. II. 15.

⁴⁴ Curtius X. II. 20.

⁴⁵ DB IV. 2–40, Kent, p. 131.

⁴⁶ DB IV. 34, Kent, p. 131.

⁴⁷ Curtius X. II. 20.

⁴⁸ DB III. 14–15, Kent, p. 127.

⁴⁹ Arrian VII. 9. 2.

⁵⁰ Curtius X. II. 23 f.

⁵¹ Curtius X. II. 30; cf. Justin XII. 10; Diodorus XVII. 109. 2; Arrian VII. 8. 3.

⁵² Curtius X. III. 1; Justin XII. 10.

with such force, struck them all with terror”.⁵³ This passage seems to be influenced by the rhetoric of a people with a history of tyrannical rule. At the same time an inscription of Darius I also provides a close parallel, in which he specifically underlines the importance of striking fear. “By the favor of Ahuramazda these are the countries which I got into my possession along with this Persian folk, which felt fear of me and bore me tribute: Elam, Media, Babylonia . . .”⁵⁴ Interestingly in Darius’ value system the protection of the Persian people has special merits and in itself wards off fear. For he continues:

If thus thou shalt think, “May I not feel fear of any other”, protect this Persian people; if the Persian people shall be protected, thereafter for the longest while happiness unbroken—this will by Ahura come down upon this royal house.⁵⁵

As Curtius informs us further down the narrative, Alexander too turns his attention and admiration towards the Persians. He shuts the Macedonians out, admits only Asiatic soldiers,⁵⁶ orders an assembly of the Persian troops and addresses them with praise.

Alexander says that he had crossed into Asia hoping to add famous nations and great forces to his kingdom, and he was not disappointed with what he had found. On the contrary, the reports had under-stated their merits for he sees them as brave soldiers of unfailing loyalty to their kings. He had expected luxury and pleasure seeking to prevail everywhere, but he finds them as men ready to endure hardship with strength of mind and body and courage combined with loyalty. He adds that, although he was declaring this for the first time, he had known it for long and that is why he had selected men of military age from among them and incorporated them with his soldiers, giving them the same equipment and arms. However, they were blessed with the added virtues of obedience and submission to discipline as well.⁵⁷

⁵³ Curtius X. III. 3; cf. Diodorus XVI. 22.3, 84.2 f. on Philip’s manner.

⁵⁴ DPe 5–18, Kent, p. 136.

⁵⁵ DPe 18–24, Kent, p. 136.

⁵⁶ Curtius X. III. 5.

⁵⁷ Curtius X. III. 7–10; cf. Polyaeus 4. 3. 7: “Alexander conquered Asia. The soldiers were annoying to him, oppressive, and insisted that all his achievements were due to them. He ordered the Macedonians to arm and stand by themselves, and the Persians to stand opposite them. When they separated, he said, ‘Macedonians, select whomever you wish of the officers. I will command the Persians. If you win, I will do whatever you command, but if you lose, keep quiet, having learned that you can do nothing.’ The stratagem amazed the Macedonians, and thereafter they became more moderate in their treatment of Alexander” (trans. P. Krentz and E.L. Wheeler, Chicago, 1994, Vol. I, pp. 335–337).

CHAPTER TEN

ALEXANDER'S FINAL DAYS AND IRANIAN REFLECTIONS

Alexander's death follows not long after that of Hephaestion, at Babylon in middle of June 323 BC.¹ His future plans had been for the conquest of Arabia and colonization of the Persian Gulf coast.²

It is perhaps significant that his death follows crucial theological controversies, some touching on the basic financial foundations of Babylonian temples.³ The defensive measures of the clergy is manifested in the form of warnings and various omens—some reported somewhat comically.⁴ Alexander is vulnerable to such omens and predictions and acts according to the advices offered.⁵ In some reports a Greek philosopher, Anaxarchus, intervenes and changes Alexander's mind towards rationality.⁶

While the cause of death seems to be an illness that following a lengthy banquet turns into high fever and kills after several days, as reported by the 'Royal Diary',⁷ there are also reports of poisoning by his close Greek and Macedonian associates involving even a figure like Aristotle.⁸ In either case, the end result is that the predictions of the clergy prove fateful and triumph over the philosopher's logic.

Furthermore it is significant that, although the primary players are the priests of the Babylonian temple of Bel, Alexander seems to have lost the support of Iranian divinities as well, significantly the goddess of waters. At the same time, there seems to be included in the sources a story that juxtaposes Alexander's end with that of Darius, presenting Alexander—in

¹ Arrian VII. 28. 1. He was thirty-two years old and had reigned for twelve years.

² Arrian VII. 19. 5.

³ Arrian VII. 17. 1–5; cf. Diodorus XVII. 112. 2–3.

⁴ Plutarch, *Alexander* 73. 3: "The largest and handsomest lion in his menagerie was attacked by a tame ass and kicked to death."

⁵ Plutarch, *Alexander* 73–75; cf. Diodorus XVII. 112. 4: "After some hesitation, he sent most of his Friends into Babylon, but altered his own route so as to avoid the city and set up his headquarters in a camp at a distance of two hundred furlongs."

⁶ Diodorus XVII. 112. 5; Justin XII. 13 who calls the priests 'Magi'.

⁷ Arrian VII. 25. 1–26. 3; Plutarch, *Alexander* 75. 3–76.

⁸ Arrian VII. 27. 1–2; cf. Justin XII. 13–14 reports the poison as the only possible cause of death; Plutarch, *Alexander* 75. 3–4 denies the report.

the larger frame—as the substitute Achaemenid king, replacing him for a while and receiving the fated harm instead.

The connection with the Iranian divinity of water is through Roxane's intervention, who as stated above seems to enter the stories as an agent of the goddess, bringing her support to Alexander and his kingship. At the final stages of Alexander's illness, Arrian includes an account that he characterizes as dubious. Nevertheless its elements are of significance from an Iranian point of view.

One writer has not even shrunk from the statement that Alexander, perceiving that he could not survive, went to throw himself into the Euphrates, so that he might disappear from the world and leave behind the tradition more credible to posterity that his birth was of the gods and that to the gods he passed; but Roxane his wife saw that he was going out, and when she prevented him he cried aloud that she then grudged him everlasting fame as having been truly born a god.⁹

One could perhaps see that he is pulled back by the goddess' representative from her element, the life giving water, that here in the final version is seen to have acted as expecting to give him immortality, if perceived as divine as the consequence of his disappearance. In other words it is possible to see the early original version informing primarily of the goddess' desertion, while earlier she had declared her support through signs in the course of the Sogdian campaign.¹⁰

In another story again in connection with Alexander's end, the role of water is portrayed as significant, especially as it seems to echo a factor in a story also told about Darius' end.

Arrian states that Alexander's end was near and on the authority of Aristobulus reports that something ominous happened which foretold of the coming of the end. Alexander seated on the throne is busy with distributing the army that had come from Persia with Peucests and from the coast with Philoxenus and Menander, into the Macedonian ranks, when he becomes thirsty. Getting up and moving away he leaves the throne vacant. On either side of the throne were couches with silver feet, on which his attendants had been sitting. They too had followed the king and only the guard of eunuchs was left standing round the throne. Now some obscure fellow, some say a prisoner under open arrest, seeing the throne and the couches unoccupied made his way up and sat on the throne.

⁹ Arrian VII. 26. 3.

¹⁰ See above.

Because of some Persian custom, the eunuchs did not drag him off the throne but began tearing their clothes and beating their breasts and faces as if some disaster had happened. Alexander puts the man under torture to find out the depth of the perceived plot, but all the man said was that he had acted on impulse. This answer strengthened the seers' forebodings of disaster.¹¹ Previously it was noted that this story seems to reflect the ancient Mesopotamian tradition of 'Substitute King' at times of trouble, in order to avert the fated doom from the actual king. It is significant that two versions of the story clearly report on Alexander killing the man according to the priests' recommendations.¹²

In relation to the role of water, it is noteworthy that, in Arrian's story, Alexander vacates his throne in order to get a drink. Other than the natural question of the role of the mentioned attendants and the whereabouts of the royal cup-bearer causing the king himself to leave the throne in search of a drink from some source, it is possible to see another reference to the role of water or its absence when needed.

It would be relevant to recall that the stories on Darius' end also include an account of his thirst and receiving a drink of water just before death.¹³ Perhaps it is possible to see the accounts of the two kings' end ultimately originating from a single source that had included references to the Iranian divinity of water, and at some stage coming in contact with stories on substitute kings and their sacrifice at times of peril. Perhaps, in a version of the story, Alexander was presumed as the substitute king who had lost the support of the goddess and was doomed to be sacrificed, while the Achaemenid king, in the story, was seen as receiving the goddess' blessing.

Such a tale would have soothed the feelings of the defeated Iranians who, despite Alexander's efforts to qualify as their legitimate king, still longed for their lost monarch. As we shall see in the next chapter, similar sentiments are encountered in an account on Alexander's entombment.

The story of the vacant throne was seemingly partner with another story, also relating to the theme of substitute king and interestingly as a counter-balance to a theme referred to by Curtius and occurring in the context of Darius' speech where he prays to the gods that no one may remove his diadem or place it on his head (Curtius 5. 8.13). In the story

¹¹ Arrian VII. 24. 1-3; cf. Diodorus XVII. 116. 2-4; Plutarch, *Alexander* 73. 3-74. 1 who report that the man was put to death on the priests' advice.

¹² Diodorus XVII. 116. 4; Plutarch, *Alexander* 74. 1.

¹³ Plutarch, *Alexander* 43. 2; cf. Curtius V. 13. 24 f. and see above.

reported by Arrian that is exactly what happens to Alexander's diadem; he loses it to the wind and has it brought back to him. However, other portents in Arrian's account stand as ominous.

Alexander, having proved the soothsayers wrong, safely marches out of Babylon with renewed confidence and sails for the lakes. As it happens the Assyrian kings' tombs are placed in the lakes and marshlands. Alexander, at the helm and wearing a sun hat bound with the diadem, has his hat removed by the wind as the diadem flies off and gets caught by a reed next to a tomb. This itself was a bad omen, Arrian says, but there was more to come. One of the sailors swims after the diadem and, in order not to have it soaked, bounds it round his head, thus bringing it back to Alexander. Arrian states that according to most historians Alexander: first gives the man 1 talent as reward and then beheads him in obedience to the prophecy that had warned him not to leave untouched the head which had worn the diadem.¹⁴

Despite dim reflections of ambivalent ancient accounts, the extant sources report on overwhelming grief and mourning on the news of Alexander's death, especially among the Iranians.¹⁵ Curtius' account which resumes just before Alexander's death is quite detailed on the mourning in Babylon, including that of the Persians. He states that the soldiers kept vigil under arms, as the Babylonians from the walls and roofs were looking out to get information. None dared to light their lamps and, because they could not use their eyes, they listened to the noise and outcries. Out of fear, they ran into the dark streets and into each other. The Persians had shorn their hair and were wearing mourning garments. Together with their wives and children, they grieved for a king who had been just over their nation.¹⁶

On the question of not lighting a lamp, perhaps it is relevant to note that Darius' mother is also said to "abstained from food and shunned the light of day" as she takes her own life on the news of Alexander's death.¹⁷ On the other hand, the preference for darkness by the terrified Babylonians may not be ritualistic, but rather a natural reaction in chaotic times of people wishing to remain invisible.¹⁸

¹⁴ Arrian VII. 22. 1–5; cf. Diodorus XVII. 116. 5–117. 1, where it is reported that he failed to sacrifice according to the priests' advice and instead went to his final banquet.

¹⁵ Cf. Justin XIII. 1, who reports on Macedonians rejoicing at his death as that of an enemy; Curtius X. 5. 19–25; Diodorus XVII. 118. 3.

¹⁶ Curtius X. 5. 15–18.

¹⁷ Curtius X. 5. 24.

¹⁸ Cf. Boyce, 1991, p. 17.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ALEXANDER'S ENTOMBMENT AND IRANIAN ECHOES

Alexander died in Babylon after conquering the Persian empire and extending its boundaries beyond, in the east. He had never returned to Macedonia after having left it in 334 BC in pursuit of his conquests. Oddly his body was not taken home either but rather buried in Egypt¹ according to his own instructions just before death.²

The question of Iranian identity and the role of Persians in the frame of his empire is reflected in the accounts of his funeral as well. Arrhidaeus, Alexander's half brother, was in charge of the preparations for the funeral, an endeavour that takes two years to accomplish.³ The result is a magnificent structure in the form of a funeral carriage that is built of precious metals and stones and boasts of artistic workmanship and fine engineering. The iconography of the reliefs and the designs employed represent Alexander as the glorious king of his empire.⁴ The role of the Persians is specifically stressed as equal to that of the Macedonians, informing of a vision of royal splendour and military might that relies on Macedonian and Persian forces.⁵

Furthermore, the wheels of the funeral carriage are referred to as "Persian wheels"⁶ and its structure in the use of poles seems to rely on Persian engineering.⁷ Sixty-four strong and large-body mules are tied to the poles pulling the carriage. Each mule has a crown with a gilded finish and a golden bell hangs by his either cheek,⁸ adding a musical dimension to the visual splendour.

¹ Diodorus XVIII. 28. 3; Justin XIII. IV; Strabo XVII. 1. 8; Pausanias I. VI. 3.

² Curtius X. 5. 4.

³ Diodorus XVIII. 28. 2.

⁴ Diodorus XVIII. 26–28.

⁵ Diodorus XVIII. 27. 1: "On the first of these tablets was a chariot ornamented with work in relief, and sitting in it was Alexander holding a very splendid sceptre in his hands. About the king were groups of armed attendants, one of Macedonians, a second of Persians of the bodyguard, and armed soldiers in front of them."

⁶ Diodorus XVIII. 27. 3.

⁷ Diodorus XVIII. 27. 4, trans. R.M. Geer, Vol. 9, Cambridge, 1933, p. 93, n. 2; cf. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 6. 1. 51–52, 6. 4. 2.

⁸ Diodorus XVIII. 27. 5.

Through every city that the carriage passes, spectators who have heard of its fame, gather and escort it on its way out.⁹ It is also accompanied by a crowd of road menders and mechanics, as well as soldiers sent to escort it. The reason for their presence is stated as adding to the magnificence of the funeral.¹⁰

Ptolemy with an army goes as far as Syria to receive it and escorts it to Alexandria, which he decides is a better place for the glory of Alexander than taking the body to the temple of Ammon,¹¹ which had been Alexander's own preference.¹² He is said to be rewarded by gods for honouring the dead Alexander.¹³

With regard to the change of burial place¹⁴ it is interesting to note *Shāhnāma*'s account that includes a story on differences of opinions between Persians and Greeks, and the final choice of Alexandria due to divine intervention. It tells of the Persians' wish to take Alexander to a place, the description of which is reminiscent of that of the Achaemenid kings' burial place. However, a voice from that mountain negates that decision, in effect turning him away. It is argued that this account includes a popular nationalistic story that envisions the Achaemenids as the final victors over Alexander, not seeing him worthy of their company at their final resting place or their eternal throne.¹⁵

The *Shāhnāma* story says:

*cho tābūtash az dasht bardāshstand
hamī dast bar dast begzāshstand*

As they picked up his casket from the plain,
they put their hands together.

*do āvāz būd rūmī o pārsī
sokhanshān ze tābūt shod yek basī*

⁹ Diodorus XVIII. 28. 1.

¹⁰ Diodorus XVIII. 28. 2.

¹¹ Diodorus XVIII. 28. 3.

¹² Curtius X. 5. 4.

¹³ Diodorus XVIII. 28. 4.

¹⁴ Cf. Pausanias I. 7. 1.

¹⁵ P. Jamzadeh, "Alexander's funeral according to Firdawsi and its Achaemenid embellishments", *Iranshenasi* II: 4, 1991, pp. 829–833; *Id.*, "Remnants of the legacy of the Achaemenids in the *Shāhnāma* of Firdawsi", *Proceedings of the Second European Conference of Iranian Studies*, ed. B.G. Fragner *et al.*, Rome, 1995, pp. 317–323; on the eternal throne see P. Jamzadeh, *The Achaemenid Throne: Its Significance and its Legacy*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1991, pp. 84 f.; *Id.* "Darius' Thrones: temporal and eternal", *Iranica Antiqua* 30, 1995, pp. 1–21.

There were two voices: Roman and Persian,
their disagreement over the casket increased.

*har ān kas ke ū pārsī būd goft
ke ū rā joz īdar nabāyad nehoft*

Whoever was a Persian, he said,
he should only be buried here.

*cho īdar bovad khāk-e shāhanshahān
che tāzīd tābūt gerd-e jahān*

For this is the tomb of the kings,
why would you race the casket around the world?

*chonīn goft rūmī yekī rahnamāi
ke īdar nehoftan marā nīst rāy*

A Roman (*i.e.* Greek) guide said,
my council is against burying him here.

*agar beshnavīd ānche gūyam dorost
sekandar dar ān khāk rīzad ke rost*

If you listen closely to what I am saying,
Alexander should be poured into the soil that he grew from.

*yekī pārsī nīz goft īn sokhan
agar chand gūi nayāyad be bon*

A Persian also said: repeating this opinion,
will not give it more depth.

*namāyam shomā rā yekī marghzār
ze shāhān-e pīshīnegān yādgār*

I will take you to a meadow,
a monument from the kings before.

*va rā khoram khvānad jahāndīda pīr
bedū andarūn bīsheh o ābgīr*

The wise old man calls it blessed,
it has forests and ponds.

*cho porsī torā pāsokh āyad ze kūh
ke āvāz-e ānrā bedānad gorūh*

If you ask, the mountain will answer,
the voice that is recognized by the group.

*beyārīd mar pūr-e fartūt rā
ham īdar bedārīd tābūt rā*

Bring over the old feeble,
and also bring the casket here.

*beporsad o az kūh pāsokh dehand
shomā rā bedīn rāy-e farrokh nehand*

He will ask and the mountain will answer,
you shall be set on the fortunate decision.

*beraftand pūyān bekerdār-e gharm
bedān bīskeh ku nāmzad shod be khoram*

They went running as the mountain sheep,
to that meadow called blessed.

*begoftand o pāsokh chonīn dād bāz
ke tābūt-e shāhān che dārī derāz*

They spoke and it was answered back,
why do you delay the king's casket?

*ke khāk-e sekandar be eskandarīst
ke kard ū bedān rūzgarān ke zīst*

Alexander's dust should go to Alexandria,
the place he built when he lived.

*cho āvāz beshnūd lashkar beraft
bebordand az ān bīskeh sandūgh taft*

Upon hearing the voice the army left,
they removed the box from the meadow fast.¹⁶

As it was argued earlier, the topographical information related in this segment of the story of Alexander in the *Shāhnāma* approximates that in the archaeological records known for the site of Naqsh-e Rostam. For centuries, if indeed not millennia before Alexander's time, that site had enjoyed a much honoured position among the local population. Long before the Achaemenids, the Elamite kings had carved their rock reliefs on the

¹⁶ *Shāhnāma*, ed. J. Mohl, Vol. 5, Tehran, 1990, pp. 1484–1485; A manuscript of the Moscow edition, Vol. VII, p. 107 has '*dasht bar dasht beqzashtand*', 'they traversed the plains', which would accord with Diodorus XVIII. 28. 1 f.; cf. *Khamseh-e Nezami Ganjavi*, ed. V. Dastgerdi, Tehran, 1938, p. 144.

mountain face.¹⁷ For the Achaemenids in particular this site had much reverence. Darius I chose this spot for his final resting place and carved into the rocks high up on the mountain and on its surface, a monumental tomb the sculptural program of which completed that of Persepolis and signified the king's eternal throne, while Persepolis had stood as his temporal throne.¹⁸ Following his choice his successors also carved their tombs into the rocks of the same mountain nearby, emulating Darius' design in almost every detail. Seemingly here we have a mountain that does have "monuments from ancient kings". As for the specifications of "forest" and "pond", again archaeology tells us of the existence of a cistern belonging to the Achaemenid period, cut into the rock and fed by a spring.¹⁹ The overflowing pond would have supported the trees and the foliage in the surrounding area, creating a beautiful lush place deserving of the characterization "*khōram*", 'happy', 'blessed', perhaps a place where the souls of the Achaemenids were believed to dwell happily. One is reminded of the Zoroastrian and Iranian expression of "*shādravānī*", 'happiness for the soul'.

The story furthermore tells of a group's attempt to have Alexander buried there as well. But a revered voice from the mountain denies him that and sends them away. It was argued that perhaps one can see here vestiges of a pacifying nationalistic folkloric story that recognizes the Achaemenids as the final victors. Respected and honoured resting in their eternal thrones, they are the ones who refuse the intruder amongst themselves and turn him away.²⁰

Although in real historical terms at the time of Alexander's death there would not have been much space left for another monumental tomb at Naqsh-e Rostam—the latter Achaemenid kings having found their burials in the mountain behind Persepolis²¹—nevertheless, what this story relates is the popular belief of the people and the drama in relation to the significance of the Achaemenid burial place. This story serves as a context or a stage for the perceived mortification of Alexander and the humiliation of his soul in seeking acceptance among the Achaemenid kings.

¹⁷ Schmidt, 1970, p. 121.

¹⁸ P. Jamzadeh, "Darius' thrones...", 1995, pp. 1–21; cf. Nezami Ganjavi, p. 72, who ascribes the invention of the form of the tomb as a cross to Alexander for his own tomb, while the ideology of the Achaemenid design in reflecting the world also survives in Nezami's designation.

¹⁹ Schmidt, 1970, p. 98.

²⁰ See n. 15.

²¹ Schmidt, 1970 pp. 98 f., pls. 63 f.

While in general and in the end *Shāhnāma*'s account also accords with the information known through the histories, according to which Ptolemy took Alexander's body to Egypt for burial. Nevertheless, a patriotic vision loyal to the memory of the Achaemenids would also add this digression to Naqsh-i Rostam merely in order to have a divine voice from the tombs of the kings at the mountain turn him away and instruct the party to take him to the place suitable to him, to a city he himself had built.

This sort of effort in giving a soothing veneer to some harsh reality finds affinities in other literature of the period as well, for instance in the Babylonian text known as the Dynastic Prophecy. According to this writing, Darius III is the victor over the Macedonians who are referred to as the foreigners.²² Another example is the Sibylline Prophecy from western Anatolia which describes the destruction of Macedonians by Persians.²³

On the significance of the Achaemenid kings' burial place one may note an account in Justin, related however, about Alexander's ancestors.

The king after Caranus was Perdiccas, who was known both for his illustrious life and for his memorable final instructions, which resembled an oracular utterance. When on his deathbed, the aged Perdiccas indicated to his son, Argaeus, the place where he wished to be buried, and gave orders that not merely his own bones but also those of his successors to the throne be laid in the spot, declaring that the throne would stay in their family as long as the remains of their descendants were buried there. It is on account of this piece of superstition that people believe that the line died out with Alexander, because he changed the place of burial.²⁴

It is noteworthy that, while a Macedonian royal cemetery exists at Vergina, at the time of Alexander's death only one tomb may have existed at this place, that of his father Philip,²⁵ or at most that of Amyntas III who died in 370–369 BC.²⁶ Although Diodorus states that Cassander buried Alexander's brother and his wife, the Macedonian king and queen of the time (316 BC) "in Aegae as was the royal custom",²⁷ the question of the age of the site in this regard remains. It is possible that the custom had only reached back to Philip II, prior to whom Macedonia had been an unstable state and

²² A.K. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, Toronto, 1975, pp. 9 f., 24–37; Briant, p. 864.

²³ S.K. Eddy, *The King is Dead, Studies in the Near Eastern Resistance to Hellenism 334–31 BC*, Lincoln, 1975, pp. 11–12; Boyce, 1991, p. 13.

²⁴ Justin 7. 2. 1–4, *apud* Heckel & Yardley, 2004, p. 3.

²⁵ E.N. Borza, *In the Shadow of Olympus*, Princeton, 1990, pp. 256 f., 260 f.

²⁶ M. Andronikos, *Vergina: The Royal Tombs and the City*, Athens, 1984, p. 65.

²⁷ Diodorus XIX. 52. 5; *cf.* Pliny IV. X. 33.

without an undisputed monarchy.²⁸ Furthermore, according to Arrian, Alexander had also seen the history of Macedonia as commencing with his father Philip,²⁹ which was seen to reflect Achaemenid propaganda.³⁰

One may perhaps conclude that the ancestral burial place, to which Justin refers, does not reach back long before Alexander's time, and certainly not to the time of the semi-mythical forebearers.

The Achaemenids' burial place at Naqsh-e Rostam, however, goes back to the time of Darius I (522–486 BC) and the start of the dynasty's second branch. The Achaemenid rock cut tombs at that site all bear a similar shape of a cross and follow a similar facade as that set by Darius I, which in itself speaks of certain ideological significances.³¹ In Justin's story the sense of importance of the emulation of burial place for the sake of continuity of the line and keeping the throne is related. Interestingly enough this characterization would seem to apply to the significance of the Achaemenid royal burial place and the fact that it is their tomb facade that relays the story of the throne and has to be faithfully repeated by the descendants of the line, as if deviating from the precise formula set down by the forebearer of the line, would be wrong or bring about calamities.

On the other hand, if Alexander had tried to be accepted as an Iranian king, then the idea of Achaemenid style burial may also have occurred to certain parties following his untimely death, and the dynastic burial place of the Achaemenids would have been considered.

It is possible to see a popular story circulating about the time of Alexander's death reflecting in its features certain characteristics of the Achaemenids' burial place finding its way to Justin's sources and projecting back as relating to Alexander's Macedonian ancestors. This story may also have included vestiges of a dim memory of the Garden of Midas in relation to the origins of the Macedonian royal house³² intruding into an Iranized account with features of the Achaemenid royal burial site.

As to the final form of the *Shāhnāma* story, which was set down in Persian verse by Firdawsi in the 10th century AD, it is possible that at some stage it had included *Justin/Trogus'* version as well. Perhaps a clue to this probability should be sought in his own words where he speaks of

²⁸ Ian Worthington, "Alexander, Philip and the Macedonian background", *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great*, ed. J. Roisman, Leiden, 2003, pp. 71 f.

²⁹ Arrian VII. 9. 2–6; cf. Curtius X. 2. 23.

³⁰ See above; cf. Heckel, 2008, p. 14.

³¹ P. Jamzadeh, "Darius' thrones...", 1995, pp. 1–21.

³² Herodotus VIII. 138.

“two voices: Persian and Roman”, with the Roman relating a sense close to that expressed by *Justin/Trogus*.

Therefore, in conclusion, one may see an original patriotic Iranian story about the Achaemenids’ burial place finding its way to a collection of material related about Alexander’s life and death and surfacing in what is now *Justin/Trogus*, while Firdawsi’s account may be seen to be affected by both renderings of the same story. Such a process has been seen before in the *Shāhnāma*, where original Achaemenid material has passed through a Classical sieve³³ before finally reaching the Sasanian sources of the *Khvdtā-nāmag*, the Pahlavi predecessor of Firdawsi’s *Shāhnāma*.

A story surviving in Aelian is also relevant here. It seems to originate from a folkloric context revealing certain Iranian elements. It also shows a relation to Firdawsi’s story, but in equipoise with its main tenor. Furthermore, it is possible that it may have come from a context where stories about Alexander and Darius existed side by side and were conflated.

As Aelian states it: “Alexander, son of Philip and Olympias, lay dead in Babylon—the man who said he was the son of Zeus. While his followers argued about the succession he lay waiting for burial, which even the very poor achieve, since the nature common to all mankind requires a funeral for those no longer living. But he was left unburied for thirty days, until Aristander of Telmissus, whether by divine inspiration or for some other reason, entered the Macedonian assembly and said that of all kings in recorded history Alexander was the most fortunate, both in his life and in his death; the gods had told him that the land which received his body, the earlier habitation of his soul, would enjoy the greatest good fortune and be unconquered through the ages.

On hearing this they began to quarrel seriously, each man wishing to carry off the prize to *his own kingdom*, so as to have a relic guaranteeing safety and permanence for his realm. But Ptolemy, if we are to believe the story, stole the body and hurriedly made off with it to Alexandria in Egypt. The other Macedonians did nothing, whereas Perdiccas tried to give chase. He was not so much interested in consideration for Alexander and due respect for his body as fired and incited by Aristander’s prediction. When he caught up with Ptolemy there was quite a violent struggle over the corpse, in some way akin to the one over the Phantom at Troy, which Homer celebrates in his tale, where Apollo puts it down among the heroes to protect Aeneas. Ptolemy checked Perdiccas’ attack. He made a likeness of Alexander, clad

³³ P. Jamzadeh, “Reflections of Darius’ propaganda and Aeschylus’ parody in Firdawsi’s epic”, *Acta Orientalia Belgica* XII, 1999, pp. 253–258.

in royal robes and a shroud of enviable quality. Then he laid it on one of the Persian carriages, and arranged the bier sumptuously with silver, gold, and ivory. Alexander's real body was sent ahead without fuss and formality by a secret and little used route. Perdiccas found the imitation corpse with the elaborate carriage, and halted his advance, thinking he had laid hands on the prize. Too late he realised he had been deceived, it was not possible to go in pursuit.³⁴

At the outset one may note that a glaring anomaly exists in the fabric of the story that affects its rationale. For the successors are still engaged in arguments over the division of the empire, but Aristander seems to be addressing rulers of various lands, and at a time when such decisions had already been accomplished. In this relation it is noteworthy that according to other historians also the question of succession and division of the satrapies had been given priority over the funerary rites for Alexander, with various justifications.³⁵ But according to this account, on the one hand they are engaged in such debates and on the other hand they are rulers of satrapies and have to be encouraged to contend over Alexander's body. This encouragement can be seen to impart the opposite of what the wise old man in Firdawasi's story had advised. That is the primary idea the story seeks to relate, while the rationale of the *when* of the story becomes secondary.

The story reflects some mixing with accounts about Darius, in that there are two funeral carriages, one simple and lonesome, travelling in anonymity and carrying the real body of *the real king*, the other clad in sumptuous royal Persian attire and regalia, carrying a make-believe likeness of the king. In addition, stories about Hephaestion and his funeral having taken place shortly before may also have interceded.

The thirty-day delay would seem to signify an echo of influences from a Zoroastrian context. For the thirtieth day after death marks a special commemorative day during which the *Sēroza* prayer, 'thirty days prayer,' is recited.³⁶ Appropriately the segment dedicated to the thirtieth day of

³⁴ Aelian, *Historical Miscellany* 12. 64, transl. N.G. Wilson, Loeb Classical Library, 1997, pp. 405–407.

³⁵ Justin XIII. IV. Arguments are held "with the body of Alexander placed in the midst of them, that his majesty might be witness to their resolution", Watson, p. 124; Curtius X. VI.1–XX.20.

³⁶ *The Zend-Avesta*, pt. II: *The Sirōzahs, Yasts and Nyāyis*, transl. J. Darmesteter, Oxford, 1884, *SBE*, Vol. 23, pp. 2 f.

the month, in the prayer, includes references to 'paradise' and the 'bridge of the crossing of the soul.'³⁷

On the other hand *Vendidad* relates that the disposal of the dead during winter may be delayed as long as "a month long, until the birds begin to fly, the plants to grow, the floods to flow, and the wind to dry up the waters from off the earth."³⁸ This would seem to apply to regions with harsh winters during which the natural ice would preserve the body, while access to the high places of disposal would be impossible.³⁹ Such winters were perhaps experienced in northeast Iran, where Darius died, but the conditions in Babylon during summer were very different.

The possibility of some mixture between the accounts of the two kings is also hinted at in Curtius' account of Sisigambis' grief for Alexander. "You might think that she had just lost Darius and that the unhappy woman had to perform the funeral rites of two sons."⁴⁰ This characterization is irrelevant unless one is to assume that Persian funerary rites for Alexander were carried out by his adopted Persian mother. But it comes close to Aelian's story and seems to originate from a context in which stories about the two kings had come together.

However, Curtius' account includes information that seems to allude to the possibility of certain rites uncomfortable to the Macedonians that had been contemplated at some point. Amid controversies over the succession Perdiccas brings up the question of a funeral and says

therefore, since nothing else is left of him except what is always separated from immortality, let us pay as soon as possible the rites due to his body at least, not forgetting *in what city and among whom we are*, and of what a chief and what a king we have been despoiled.⁴¹ (my emphasis)

Further on we learn that Perdiccas on losing his bid for the throne to Alexander's brother Arrhidaeus,⁴² in terror bolts the room in which the body of Alexander was lying.⁴³ Although the relevance of this action to the preceding events is not clear, henceforth everyone's attention is turned towards that room. A fight breaks out and many are injured. Finally

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³⁸ *Vendidad* V. III. 10–14, transl. J. Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, pt. I: *The Vendidad*, Oxford, 1887, *SBE*, Vol. 4, p. 52.

³⁹ *Vendidad* VIII. II. 4–9 describes the temporary grave until the hardship of winter is over.

⁴⁰ Curtius X. V. 21.

⁴¹ Curtius X. VI. 7.

⁴² Curtius X. VI. 18–VII. 15.

⁴³ Curtius X. VII. 16.

Perdiccas and his followers cease combat and despite being warned not to leave Alexander's body, they flee.⁴⁴ No one has any ill intentions towards the body, but the narrative implies that certain fears existed. But what would these have been? A different funeral rite?

In the meantime Perdiccas' forces hold back the grain transported to the city, which causes famine.⁴⁵ The time frame is not clear. But further on it is related that Alexander's body is still not buried and his brother calls on the factions to unite in paying him this pious duty.⁴⁶ But other matters intervene. The division of the empire is stated.⁴⁷ And finally the funeral is attended to. According to Curtius only seven days have passed since Alexander's death.⁴⁸ And it is a wonder that in the Mesopotamian summer the body is still fresh.⁴⁹ Egyptians and Chaldeans are ordered to care for the body after their manner.⁵⁰ Ptolemy, ruler of Egypt, takes the body to Memphis and after a few years to Alexandria with every honour to his memory and name.⁵¹ Although direct references to a Zoroastrian rite of exposure are lacking from the sources, yet there are hints that such a rite may have been contemplated for Alexander. Aelian's report on Olympias' reaction to the news of delayed funerary rites for her son is significant. When Alexander's mother Olympias learned that her son lay unburied for a long time, she groaned deeply and cried in a high-pitched voice:

"My child," she said, "you wanted to reach heaven and made it your aim, but now you do not enjoy even what are surely common rights shared by all men, the *right to earth and to burial*." Thus she lamented her own fate and criticised her son's arrogance.⁵² (my emphasis)

It is noteworthy that the Zoroastrian rite of exposure is believed to result in the soul being pulled up by the sun's rays to the bridge of the crossing of souls, which is stressed as the chief merit of exposure.⁵³ Hence Olympias' remark on "wanting to reach heaven" in this context may be interpreted in this light as well.

⁴⁴ Curtius X. VII. 17–19.

⁴⁵ Curtius X. VIII. 12.

⁴⁶ Curtius X. VIII. 18.

⁴⁷ Curtius X. X. 1–4.

⁴⁸ Curtius X. X. 9.

⁴⁹ Curtius X. X. 10–12.

⁵⁰ Curtius X. X. 13.

⁵¹ Curtius X. X. 20.

⁵² Aelian, *Historical Miscellany* 13. 30, Wilson, p. 437.

⁵³ M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. 1, Leiden, 1975, p. 325.

However, we have Onesicritus' report, preserved in Strabo, about Bactrians abandoning their aged and sick in their streets to dogs and Alexander ending this practice.⁵⁴ This report reveals an exaggeratedly hostile and uncomprehending view of the Zoroastrian practice of the exposure of the dead on a high place and according to specific rites and prescriptions.⁵⁵ In view of the hostility expressed by Alexander's forces towards his Iranization policies, perhaps this report is to be seen as originating from the same pool and perhaps reflecting a reaction towards Roxane's religious practices. The number thirty was seen to play a significant role in relation to Roxane's entry into Alexander's life.⁵⁶ And if the Zoroastrian rite gleaned from these sources was for Alexander and not the result of mixing with stories about Darius, although a strong possibility for that conclusion exists, then a negative reaction from Greeks and Macedonians would have been expected. Perhaps the discontent was also fueled by a discord over different burial rites for the Macedonian king, who had increasingly become Iranized. This brings us back to Firdawsī's story, which refers to a difference of opinion over Alexander's place of burial among Iranians and Greeks. The original nationalistic story, despite Alexander's efforts in meeting Iranian criteria of kingship, finds him wanting and unworthy of a place of rest among the Achaemenid kings. But Aelian's story gives an opposite sense. The seer informs of merits for his place of burial and a competition towards that end ensues. It is perhaps possible to see this story as a reaction and response to the story surviving in the *Shāhnāma*.

⁵⁴ Strabo XI. 11. 3.

⁵⁵ *Vendidad* V. III–IV, VI. I–II, VII. VIII, VIII. I–VIII; Boyce, 1975, pp. 325–330.

⁵⁶ See above Chapter VIII.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE PLIGHT OF ALEXANDER'S FAMILY

The fate of Alexander's close relatives following his death is not a fortunate one. Accounts seem to reveal parallelisms in some details with the accounts on Darius' family, thus bringing the matter within the scope of this study.

The period after Alexander's death is one of turmoil and warfare, mainly among his generals. In the succession battles in Asia, Peucesteus, satrap of Persia, and Eumenes, Alexander's trusted general, are supporters of Alexander's heirs: his son Alexander by Roxane—born after his father's death—and Arrhidaeus Alexander's half-brother. The two heirs are referred to as 'the kings' in the sources. Eventually the generals are defeated by Antigonos and Eumenes is killed.¹

Antigonos gains control of Media and its treasury and moves to Persia and its capital Persepolis—c. 316 BC²—where he is received as the king "by the inhabitants as if he were the acknowledged lord of Asia".³ Seemingly Peucesteus is still the satrap, for it is only later that we hear of his removal.⁴

Antigonos redistributes the satrapies,⁵ which previously—c. 321 BC—had been assigned by Antipater on the authority of his being elected guardian of the kings by Macedonians and had taken the kings with him to Macedonia.⁶

However, by 317 BC Alexander's son and wife are with his mother Olympias, who has killed Alexander's half-brother and his wife and seems to rule Macedonia and be at war with Cassander,⁷ Alexander's Greek general and associate.⁸ Olympias appoints a general to fight Cassander and herself goes to Pydna accompanied by Roxane, Alexander's wife, his son

¹ Diodorus XIX. 37–44; Justin XIV. IV.

² Diodorus XIX. 45. 1–6.

³ Diodorus XIX. 48. 1.

⁴ Diodorus XIX. 48. 5.

⁵ Diodorus XIX. 48. 2.

⁶ Diodorus XVIII. 39. 3–7.

⁷ Diodorus XIX. 35. 1–4.

⁸ Cf. Plutarch, *Alexander* 74. 1–4.

Alexander IV, a half-sister of Alexander and a score of other noble ladies and some of her other kinsfolk, characterized as “a large number of persons, but persons for the most part useless in war”.⁹

The siege of Pydna by Cassander—winter of 316 BC—is described in moving and tragic tones, with animals and humans experiencing starvation and slow death.¹⁰ In Spring many of the soldiers ask Olympias for permission to leave and are received warmly in Cassander’s camp.¹¹ Few remain loyal to Olympias,¹² who is soon forced to surrender.¹³ Cassander leaves the decision about her life to the relatives of those whom she had slain, while urging them to condemn her. They follow his orders and with Olympias absent from the trial, the Macedonians condemn her to death.¹⁴ Yet Cassander plays another trick. In trying to further disrepute Olympias, he encourages her to escape, having arranged for her death on the voyage. Olympias refuses the offer, announcing that she is ready to be judged before all the Macedonians. In fear of such an outcome and the risk of her reminding the Macedonians of the benefits conferred by Alexander and Philip, Cassander sends 200 soldiers to slay her. They break into the royal house but, in facing her, are awed by her exalted rank and fail to accomplish their appointed task.¹⁵ However, she is finally murdered by the relatives of her victims.¹⁶

Cassander has royal aspirations of his own over Macedonia, and towards this goal marries Thessalonice, Alexander’s half-sister.¹⁷ His intentions are to do away with Alexander’s son and wife in order to secure his own claim. But for now he finds it prudent to merely place them in custody at the citadel of Amphipolis under the command of a trusted henchman. At the same time removing all the royal trappings of the boy Alexander and ordering “that he should no longer have royal treatment but only such as was proper for any ordinary person of private station”.¹⁸

⁹ Diodorus XIX. 35. 5; Justin XIV. VI; it is interesting to compare this account with the reports on the presence of Achaemenid royal women and children in battlefield; see Curtius III. 3. 22 f.; and see chapter I on the Plight of the Royal Achaemenid Women.

¹⁰ Diodorus XIX. 49. 1–4.

¹¹ Diodorus XIX. 50. 1–2.

¹² Diodorus XIX. 50. 3.

¹³ Diodorus XIX. 50. 5.

¹⁴ Diodorus XIX. 51. 1–2; for her cruelties see Diodorus 19. 11. 4–9.

¹⁵ Diodorus XIX. 51. 3–5.

¹⁶ Diodorus XIX. 51. 5; Justin XIV. VI; Pausanias IX. 7. 2.

¹⁷ Diodorus XIX. 52. 1.

¹⁸ Diodorus XIX. 52. 4.

Therefore, conducting himself as the king, Cassander buries Arrhidaeus and his wife "in Aegae as was the royal custom".¹⁹

In 311 BC, five years later, Cassander, Ptolemy and Lysimachus make a treaty with Antigonus deciding that Cassander should keep the command of Europe until Alexander the son of Roxane come of age, Lysimachus be ruler of Thrace, Ptolemy rule Egypt, parts of Libya and Arabia, Antigonus have Asia and the Greeks be autonomous.²⁰ However, none of them abides by the agreement or is content with his portion. Furthermore, Cassander, in anticipation of the day, murders Alexander's son and Roxane his mother. The boy was reaching adolescence and there was already talk of turning over the kingship to him.²¹

With regard to the focus of our study, Justin's account of Olympias' end includes details that are worthy of further attention:

Olympias, distressed with famine and the sword, and the wearisomeness of a long siege, surrendered herself to the conqueror, stipulating only for life. But Cassander, on summoning the people to an assembly, to inquire "what they would wish to be done with Olympias", induced the parents of those whom she had killed to put on mourning apparel, and expose her cruelties; when the Macedonians, exasperated by their statement, decreed, without regard to her former majesty, that she should be put to death; utterly unmindful that, by the labours of her son and her husband, they had not only lived in security among their neighbours, but had attained to vast power, and even to the conquest of the world. Olympias, seeing armed men advancing towards her, bent upon her destruction, went voluntarily to meet them, dressed in her royal apparel, and leaning on two of her maids. The executioners, on beholding her, struck with the recollection of her former royal dignity, and with the names of so many of their kings, that occurred to their memory in connection with her, stood still, until others were sent by Cassander to dispatch her; she, at the same time, not shrinking from the sword or the blow, or crying out like a woman, but submitting to death like the bravest of men, and suitably to the glory of her ancient race, so that you might have perceived the soul of Alexander in his dying mother. As she was expiring, too, she is said to have settled her hair, and to have covered her feet with her robe, that nothing unseemly might appear about her.²²

¹⁹ Diodorus XIX. 52. 5, this would seem to confirm Justin's story (VII. 2. 1–4) to the extent of establishing the existence of a royal cemetery, but still the question of its age remains. See the previous chapter.

²⁰ Diodorus XIX. 105. 1.

²¹ Diodorus XIX. 105. 2.

²² Justin XIV. VI.

As noted before the reports on the capture of Darius' family by Alexander had put much emphasis on the presence of Darius' mother, wife and six-year-old son in that unlikely context.²³ Such emphasis was noted as questionable, besides the larger difficulty with the acceptance of their presence in the battlefield. However, one may compare that vulnerable group with Alexander's family: his mother, wife and six-year-old son also on the run and captives, but under a more plausible circumstance.

In certain other details the two episodes also show similarities. Darius' mother, Sisigambis, has her two granddaughters, grown-up maidens, in her lap grieving.²⁴ Olympias in meeting her executioners leans on two of her maids.²⁵ Sisigambis on hearing of Alexander's death refrains from food, veils her head and turning away from her granddaughters and grandson dies after five days.²⁶ Olympias suffers famine under Cassander's siege and in her dying hour is covered properly.²⁷

Perhaps such similarities indicate the conscious juxtaposing of the two accounts, at some stage in the compilation of the histories. It is easy to see that the accounts of Alexander's family seem more original and that of Darius' folks is influenced by that account and reset in its artificial context of the capture at Issus.

On the other hand, it is also possible to see an accidental conflation in the sources with regard to the two kings—Darius and Alexander—whose accounts at various points has shown a certain concurrence, perhaps due to Alexander's assumption of the Achaemenid mantle, and the evident occasional counter-efforts running parallel to that propaganda endeavour and leaving a negative strain in the whole block. He is the conqueror who wishes to be seen as the legitimate successor to the king he has deposed, interestingly not as the establisher of a new dynasty but as the one who continues the ruling house. It may just be noted briefly here that, although the Zoroastrian sources are clearly hostile to Alexander,²⁸ yet it is significant that in the *Bundahishn* 36. 9 he is listed in the Iranian list of kings and given the same length of rule as Darius, each fourteen years.²⁹

²³ Curtius III. XI. 24.

²⁴ Curtius III. XI. 25.

²⁵ Justin XIV. VI.

²⁶ Curtius X. V. 24; cf. Diodorus XVII. 118. 3.

²⁷ Justin XIV. VI.

²⁸ Cf. *Dinkard* VII. 7, VIII. 1; *Bahman Yasht* III. 34; *Dādistān-i Mainōg-i Khrad* VIII. 29; *Ardāvīrāfnāmag* I. 7; *Bundahishn* 33, 14.

²⁹ *Zand-Akāsth, Iranian or Greater Bundahishn*, translit. and trans. by B.T. Anklesaria, Bombay, 1956, p. 307.

One may recall that Alexander addresses Darius' mother as his mother³⁰ and regards his family as his own.³¹ Perhaps it is not surprising that in their last hours the two royal mothers are reported as behaving in a similar manner, suitable to their dignity and rank, while in their plight they are accompanied by their female retinue of companions as they would have been in court. Perhaps it is due to some odd bend of a report that places the Persian queen's retinue in the battlefield voluntarily. Adding the presence of a pregnant wife and a young child only to have them captured by the magnanimous conqueror and treated kindly, as he would have treated his own family. His family, however, in their hour of peril are treated most cruelly, not by a foreign force, but by a fellow countryman—albeit Greek and not purely Macedonian—and former henchman and general of their beloved lost king, son, father and husband. Perhaps one can say that the symmetry seems more than accidental and rather deliberate and not merely due to a flawed hand confused among a mass of fortuitous similarities.

With regard to the notion of a group of women and children ill-suited for warfare,³² one may compare another group whose very business is warfare: the Amazons.³³ Interestingly in the Alexander histories they are mentioned in relation to motherhood. The Amazon queen seeks Alexander's company in order to conceive from him a child.³⁴ Furthermore, according to some sources, Alexander's Iranization follows this visit,³⁵ while in others the Amazons are brought forward by the Median satrap Atropates,³⁶ hence an Iranian connection may be perceived from the sources.³⁷

At the same time it is also possible to see the intervention of the remnants of some fables originating from a Mesopotamian core in relation to the goddess Ishtar, whose function has embraced both fertility and war.³⁸

³⁰ Curtius III. 12. 17, 24, V. 2. 19–22: "I apply to you the title due to my dearly beloved mother Olympias"; cf. Diodorus 17. 37. 6.

³¹ Curtius III. 12. 21.

³² Diodorus XIX. 35. 5; Justin XIV. VI.

³³ Arrian VII. 13; Diodorus XVII. 77. 1 f.; Curtius VI. 5. 24–32; Plutarch, *Alexander* 46; Strabo XI. 5. 3 f.

³⁴ Curtius VI. V. 30; Diodorus XVII. 77. 2; cf. Arrian VII. 13. 3.

³⁵ Curtius VI. 6. 2 f.; Diodorus XVII. 77. 4 f.

³⁶ Arrian VII. 13. 2, 6.

³⁷ Cf. Arrian VII. 13. 6: "But if Atropates did show Alexander any women riders on horse, I think they were some other barbarian women taught to ride, whom he exhibited, dressed in the traditional Amazon fashion", trans. P.A. Brunt, 2000, Vol. II. p. 249.

³⁸ See M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. II, Leiden, 1982, pp. 29 f. for discussion and references.

However, within the frame of this study it is important to note that the accounts of the two royal families, Iranian and Macedonian, find close parallels and that the accounts on Alexander's family seem more logically situated in the historical framework. For instance, it is not difficult to accept Roxane's pregnancy at the time of Alexander's death³⁹ and see that his son would have been six years old at the time of Olympias' captivity and siege. On the other hand, there are problems with the chronology with regard to the pregnancy of Darius' wife, Stateira, at the time of her captivity in the battlefield of Issus, which has prompted assumptions of Alexander's involvement.⁴⁰ Perhaps she was captured later⁴¹ or perhaps the accounts of the misfortunes of Roxane, Alexander's Iranian queen, have been mixed with those of Stateira, Darius' queen. Bearing in mind that the sources also mention another Stateira, a daughter of Darius, whom Alexander also married⁴² and who was killed by Roxane after Alexander's death.⁴³

Conflation of various accounts is one possibility. Another is that several strands of propaganda by design converge around the nucleus of the vulnerable relatives of the kings and that the behaviour of the victorious contenders towards them forms the basis for a judgement on them. Where Alexander had been kind and benevolent, Cassander is cruel. Or perhaps where Cassander displays cruelty, Alexander would have been magnanimous, even at the outset of his victories over the Achaemenid king.

³⁹ Curtius X. VI. 9.

⁴⁰ A.B. Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander*, Vol. 1, Oxford, 1980, p. 221; E.D. Carney, "Alexander and Persian women", *American Journal of Philology* 117, 1996, pp. 570 f.

⁴¹ See chapter I on the Plight of the Royal Achaemenid women.

⁴² Plutarch, *Alexander* 70. 2; Diodorus XVII. 107. 5; Arrian VII. 4. 4 calls her 'Barsine'; Curtius IV. V. 1, Darius in a letter suggests this marriage to Alexander. There is another Iranian wife of Alexander called Barsine, a widow of Memnon and a daughter of Artabanus Darius' general and kinsman, descended from the former Achaemenid kings, who is captured at Damascus and Alexander is interested in her beauty, high birth and Greek education, see Plutarch, *Alexander* 21. 4; Justin XI. 10. 2. She bears him a son, Heracles, who is also considered for kingship; see Justin XIII. 2. 7; Diodorus XX. 20. 1 f., but is killed by the ruling generals, Diodorus XX. 28. 2; Justin XV. 2. 3 has his mother killed too.

⁴³ Plutarch, *Alexander* 77. 4; cf. Arrian IV. 19. 6, 20. 4 Roxane mentioned after Stateira's death.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

REVERENCE FOR THE *FRAVASHĪ* OF ALEXANDER

Even after his death, Alexander is seen to be revered by his generals in a manner that evokes Iranian/Zoroastrian beliefs in regard to the role of the departed soul and the continuity of its influence in the lives of the living. This information survives in the accounts of Eumenes of Cardia in the context of a political device that proves effective. The fact of its success may by itself be seen as the proof of the prevalence of the belief, especially in view of its attested Iranian features.

Eumenes had been a secretary and army commander in Alexander's army who became a satrap after his death.¹ In his accounts reported by Diodorus and Plutarch, an interesting episode survives in relation to the troubled period following Alexander's death.²

In facing difficulties with establishing his authority among the Macedonian generals, Eumenes resorts to a scheme.

He declared, however, that in his sleep he had seen a strange vision, which he considered it necessary to disclose to all, for he thought it would contribute much to harmony and the general good. He said that in his sleep he had seemed to see Alexander the king, alive and clad in his kingly garb, presiding over a council, giving orders to the commanders, and actively administering all the affairs of the monarchy. "Therefore," he said, "I think that we must make ready a golden throne from the royal treasure, and that after the diadem, the sceptre, the crown, and the rest of the insignia have been placed on it, all the commanders must at daybreak offer incense to Alexander before it, hold the meetings of the council in its presence, and receive their orders in the name of the king just as if he were alive and at the head of his own kingdom." As all agreed to his proposal, everything needed was quickly made ready, for the royal treasure was rich in gold. Straightway then, when a magnificent tent had been set up, the throne was erected, upon which were placed the diadem, the sceptre, and the armour that Alexander had been wont to use. Then when an altar with a fire upon it had been put in place, all the commanders would make sacrifice from a golden casket,

¹ Cornelius Nepos, *Eumenes*, trans. J.S. Watson, London, 1897, pp. 395–405.

² Diodorus XVIII. 60. 5–61. 3, trans. R.M. Geer, Vol. 9, Cambridge, 1939, pp. 177–181; Plutarch, *Eumenes* XIII. 3–4, trans. B. Perrin, Vol. 8, 1914, pp. 117–119; cf. M. Boyce & F. Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. III, Brill, 1991, p. 19.

presenting frankincense and the most costly of the other kinds of incense and making obeisance to Alexander as to a god. After this those who exercised command would sit in the many chairs that had been placed about and take counsel together, deliberating upon the matters that from time to time required their attention. Eumenes, by placing himself on an equality with the other commanders in all the matters that were discussed and by seeking their favour through the most friendly intercourse, wore down the envy with which he had been regarded and secured for himself a great deal of good-will among the commanders. As their reverence for the king grew stronger, they were all filled with happy expectations, just as if some god were leading them.³

Plutarch's account is somewhat different in its arrangement, but it is even more emphatic on its Zoroastrian aspect.

Seeing that they were as unable to lead as they were unwilling to follow, he brought superstition to bear. He said, namely, that Alexander had appeared to him in a dream, had shown him a tent arrayed in royal fashion with a throne standing in it, and had then said that if they held their councils and transacted their business there, *he himself would be present and would assist them in every plan and enterprise which they undertook in his name*. Eumenes easily convinced Antigenes and Teutamus that this was true. They were unwilling to go to him, and he himself thought it undignified to be seen at the doors of others. So they erected a royal tent, and a throne in it which they called the throne of Alexander, and there they met for deliberation on matters of highest importance.⁴ (my emphasis)

As pointed out by Boyce and Grenet, this episode clearly shows the Zoroastrian concept of reverence for the *fravashī* of the dead king.⁵

That the *fravashī* of the dead ancestors can bring help to the descendants is still a strong belief even among present-day Zoroastrians. A manifestation of this belief is seen in the formula '*hemat-i khūbī-do hemra kra*', 'may his good will be with you', as used among the Zoroastrians of Iran for condolences and also in relation to the rituals and ceremonies held for the dead.⁶ The idea finds precedence among Iranians of antiquity with a belief in the protective spirit of ancestors.⁷

³ Diodorus XVIII. 60. 4–61. 3.

⁴ Plutarch, *Eumenes* XIII. 3–4.

⁵ Boyce & Grenet, 1991, p. 19; For a comparison with Greek *daemon*, see Boyce, 1982, p. 254.

⁶ P. Jamzadeh, "The Yazdi Zoroastrian—Dari Formulas of Greeting", *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute*, No. 67, 2005, p. 55.

⁷ Boyce, 1975, p. 119; *Id.*, 1982, p. 55.

In Nepos' version the tent holding the golden chair, sceptre and diadem is also mentioned and their daily meetings in the name of Alexander.⁸

One may also note the significance of the empty throne going back to the Hittites and standing for the throne of ancestors.⁹ In ancient India, empty thrones also stood for invisible deities, or manifestations of Chakravartin, 'the ruler of the world'.¹⁰ It may have survived in Sasanian representations as well.¹¹

An obvious association, in regard to the presence of the fire altar, mentioned in Diodorus' version¹² is with the representations on the tombs of the Achaemenid kings where a fire altar stands on the throne platform contra the position of the king who is depicted as paying homage to it.¹³

⁸ Nepos, *Eumenes VII*, trans. Watson, p. 400.

⁹ H. Danthine, "L'image des trones vides et des trones porteurs de symboles dans le porche ancien", *Bibliothèque Archeologique et Historique* 30, 1939, pp. 854–866.

¹⁰ J. Auboyer, *Le trone et son Symbolisme dans l'Inde ancienne*, Paris, 1949, pp. 61 f.

¹¹ P.O. Harper, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period*, New York, 1981, p. 104; P. Jamzadeh, *The Achaemenid Throne: Its Significance and its Legacy*, University of California, Berkeley, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1991, p. 26.

¹² Diodorus XVIII. 61. 1.

¹³ Schmidt, 1970, p. 85, pls. 19–22; Boyce, 1982, pp. 112 f.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

TESTIMONY OF ZOROASTRIAN SOURCES

In general, Alexander does not enjoy a positive image in Zoroastrian texts as evidenced, for example, by *Bundahishn* 33. 14;

Then, during the reign of Dārāe son-of-Dārāe, the emperor Alexander came to Irānsahr, hying from Arūm (*i.e.* Greece), killed king Dārāe, destroyed all the families of rulers, magi, and public-men of Irānsahr, extinguished an immense number of sacred-fires, seized the commentary of the Revelation of Mazda-worship, and sent it to Arūm, burned the *Avesta*, and divided Irānsahr among ninety petty-rulers.¹

With regard to the sending of the sacred books to Greece, *Dinkard* III is more detailed:

That which was in the fortress of documents came to be burnt; and that in the treasury of Shapīgān into the hands of the Arūmans, and was translated by him even into the Greek language, as information which was connected with the ancients.²

The same subject of Alexander's treatment of the sacred texts is dealt with in the Persian Zoroastrian *Rivayats*, and interestingly come to support a premise of this study, that is the use of Iranian and Zoroastrian motifs for Alexander's propaganda. In recounting the titles and subjects of the twenty-one *Nasks* (treatises) of the *Avesta*, the *Rivayats* state that, after Alexander, parts of the books, or rather certain precise numbers of chapters from several books, were seen to be missing. It is significant that the list enumerated includes mainly the topics of kingship, government and

¹ *Zand-Ākāsīh, Iranian or Greater Bundahishn*, trans. B.T. Anklesaria, Bombay, 1956, pp. 275–277.

² *Pahlavi Texts*, pt. IV, *Contents of the Nasks*, trans. E.W. West, Oxford, 1892, *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 37, p. XXXI; cf. *Persian Rivayats, Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 37, pp. 437, 446; *Letter of Tansar*, ed. M. Minovi, Tehran, 1975, pp. 56, 118 f., 140; cf. J. Bidez & F. Cumont, *Les Mages Hellénisés*, Paris, 1938, Vol. I, pp. 86–88 for an argument in support of this claim based on the evidence of Classical sources, mainly Pliny XXX. ii. 4; J.J. Modi, "Alexander the Great and the destruction of the ancient literature of the Parsees at his hands", *Oriental Conference Papers*, Bombay, 1932, pp. 58–116; On the translation of Persian books into Greek, from Persian libraries and on various subjects, and sending them to Greece see also *Nizami*, 1938, pp. 70, 268.

judiciary.³ It was argued earlier in the present work that there is reason to believe that Alexander had used parts of Darius I's rhetoric as propaganda tools towards establishing his kingship as legitimate in Iranians' eyes. Perhaps what survives in the *Rivayats* also echoes that fact, but from the point of view of a negative recollection of Alexander's efforts. Perhaps it is his adoption of the Persian king's rhetoric, from the captured archives, that has come to be remembered in the later religious texts as his misappropriation of the holy books. The subjects of the missing chapters would seem to be an indication of the use of certain Iranian material, dealing with such topics, by Alexander and for establishing his kingship and governing in Iran.

Furthermore, another Zoroastrian text, the *Bahman Yasht*, also seems to refer to Alexander's use of religious motifs for propaganda purposes, and denounce him forcefully: "Wicked Alexander destroyed by the good religion and goes unseen and unknown from the world."⁴ In other words, while this account seems to vouch for his use of religious motifs to make himself known to the Iranians as righteous, its verdict on that same note is negative. He had not succeeded in presenting himself as a rightful king, ordained by the religion. He has perished "unseen and unknown" from the religion's standpoint.

Of interest is also *Bundahishn* 36. 8, that states Alexander in the Iranian list of kings and gives him the same length of rule as Darius III, fourteen years.⁵ It was suggested above that this evidence would seem to show that in earlier Iranian sources certain similar accounts had been related for both kings and perhaps conflated at some level. Perhaps in this regard it is relevant to note that another Zoroastrian text, *Minog-e Khirad* VIII. 27–30, also lists Alexander, but as belonging to Ahriman's camp, and countering a list of rightful kings ordained by Ahuramazda. The two groups suffer altered fates of losing their creator's given immortality by the will of the opposing camp's lord: "For it is declared that 'the Yim and Frēdūn and Kāi-Ūs of Aūharmazd are created immortal, and Aharman so altered them as is known. And Aharman so contemplated that Bēvarāsp and Frāsīyāk and Alexander should be immortal, but Aūharmazd, for great Advantage,

³ *Pahlavi Texts*, Pt. IV: Contents of the Nasks, Oxford, 1892., *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 37, transl. E.W. West, pp. 422–447.

⁴ *Bahman Yasht* II. 20, *Sacred Books of the East* Vol. 5, p. 200.

⁵ Anklesaria, 1956, p. 307; cf. Tabari, Vol. IV, p. 94 (702) who ascribes the fourteen years of Alexander to a Persian tradition and different from a Christian tradition, *Shāhnāma* also ascribes fourteen years to each, see ed. J. Mohl, pp. 1387, 1406.

so altered them as that which is declared.”⁶ Without expanding on the probable controversies involved, one may just note that it seems to refer to alternations and misplacements of personages, including Alexander, or especially Alexander.

According to another Zoroastrian text, the *Book of Arda Viraf* I. 1–15, Alexander’s actions are responsible for causing doubt in peoples’ minds regarding the religion and even creating schisms. Such conclusions are added to his list of destructions, on account of which he is specifically mentioned as the agent of the devil. Up until his time the religion had been pure and people had been without doubts. The devil through Alexander creates doubts and discords.

Thus they relate: Once the righteous Zoroaster received the faith and made it current in the world and to the end of 300 years the faith was uncontaminated and men were free from doubts.

Afterwards the accursed Destructive spirit, holder of lies, to cause doubt of this faith among men deluded the accursed Alexander the Roman, who dwelt in Egypt who came with grievous mischief, strife, and trouble to Ēran Shahr.

He slew the ruler of Ēran and destroyed the court and Sovereignty and laid it to waste.

The faith of which the whole Avesta and Zand had been prepared on ox hides and written with liquid gold and had been placed in Istakhr of Pāpak in the House of Archives, Alexander the Roman, the ill-fortuned adversary, heretic and holder of lies, doer of evil, who dwelt in Egypt, carried off and burnt.

Many of the teachers, lawyers, herbads and mobads, the supporters of the faith, the rich and the wise of Ēran Shahr he slew.

The great ones and governors of Ēran Shahr fell into feud and strife one with another openly.

He himself was broken and fled to the evil existence.

Thereafter the men of Ēran Shahr one with another were causing destruction and strife.

Since they had no sovereign lord, chief, or teacher who knew the faith, and were doubtful in things relating to the yazds, many sorts of doctrine and belief, wrong custom, doubt, and false decisions appeared in the world.⁷

⁶ *Pahlavi Texts*, Pt. III, trans. E.W. West, *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 24, p. 35.

⁷ H.W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books*, Oxford, 1971, pp. 151–152; Cf. M. Haug & E.W. West, *The Book of Arda Viraf*, Amsterdam, 1971, pp. 141–144.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Various instances in the Alexander Histories, as noted in this study, point to the presence of Iranian religious advisers at Alexander's court who inform and guide him on religious matters. Interestingly this assumption is supported by a note in Pliny, according to which Alexander is said to have been accompanied by a man named Osthanes, disciple of a Zoroaster.¹ They follow a much earlier Zoroaster, whom Pliny designates as the original author of 'magic', although this is more likely a label for Eastern religious thought and its corollary branch of medicine.² This Zoroaster is said to have lived 6,000 years before Plato.³ One should note that Pliny ascribes 'magic' to Moses and the Jews as well.⁴

Regarding the Iranian School, Pliny mentions an Osthanes, follower of another Zoroaster, who accompanies Xerxes on his invasion of Greece and exerts a significant influence on Greek philosophers, including Plato, who

¹ Pliny XXX. 8–11, trans. W.H.S. Jones, Loeb, 1963, Vol. 8, p. 285; cf. Nizami 8. 44:
gorūhī ze dīvān dastūr-e ū
be hekmat nebeshtand manshūr-e ū

a group of demons were his Magi
wisely wrote his orders

seems to originate from a hostile context, designating his Zoroastrian priests as demons.

² Cf. Dio Chrysostom 36. 40 f. for a more positive evaluation of the Magi and the "Greeks ignorance" about them, trans. J.W. Cohoon & H.L. Crosby, Loeb, 1940, Vol. 3, p. 457; cf. Boyce-Grenet, 1991, pp. 491–565 for a review of "Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha".

³ Pliny XXX. 3–4:

Without doubt magic arose in Persia with Zoroaster. On this our authorities are agreed, but whether he was the only one of that name, or whether there was also another afterwards, is not clear. Eudoxus, who wished magic to be acknowledged as the noblest and most useful of the schools of philosophy, declared that this Zoroaster lived 6,000 years before Plato's death, and Aristotle agrees with him. Hermippus, a most studious writer about every aspect of magic, and an exponent of two million verses composed by Zoroaster, added summaries too to his rolls, and gave Agonaces as the teacher by whom he said that he had been instructed, assigning to the man himself a date five thousand years before the Trojan war . . .

Jones, *Ibid.*, pp. 279–281; cf. Boyce-Grenet, 1991, pp. 514 f., 525 f.; Bidez & Cumont, Vol. I, p. 14, for rationalizing this information in a likely historic context.

⁴ Pliny XXX. 11: "There is yet another branch of magic derived from Moses, Jannes, Lotapes, and the Jews, but living many thousand years after Zoroaster", Jones, *Ibid.*, p. 285.

travel overseas to study at Osthanes' school.⁵ It is not clear how much of this account is based on fact⁶ or mixed to a certain degree with folklore.⁷ Nevertheless, for this study, it is significant that Alexander is mentioned in this regard, especially as paralleling Xerxes and being accompanied by an Osthanes. This note by itself informs us of the existence of a tradition regarding Alexander's Iranian advisers on religious matters. The fact that it occurs under an 'Osthanes' label would further ascertain the Iranian identity of the religious advisers from a Greek perspective. Furthermore, it ties Alexander to the Schools of 'Zoroaster' and 'Osthanes', thus indicating his sympathy for the Iranian religion.

Contrary to this tradition, one could of course recall the hostility of extant Zoroastrian literature towards Alexander. However, we know that, having passed through the Sasanian state's sieve, such literature reflects the views of the dominant clergy. An account in Denkart tells of the collection and selection of Zoroastrian literature, primarily the *Avesta*, that had suffered dispersion due to Alexander's invasion.⁸ The process of collection had already begun under the Parthians, but it is during the Sasanian period that the high priest Tansar selects a version and declares it authentic.⁹ This account refers clearly to the existence of varying texts in a number of versions, both written and oral, that had predated Alexander's invasion.¹⁰

⁵ Pliny XXX. 8–9:

The first man, so far as I can discover, to write a still extant treatise on magic was Osthanes, who accompanied the Persian king Xerxes in his invasion of Greece, and sowed what I may call the seeds of this monstrous craft, infecting the whole world by the way at every stage of their travels. A little before Osthanes, the more careful inquirers place another Zoroaster, a native of Proconesus. One thing is certain; it was this Osthanes who chiefly roused among the Greek peoples not so much an eager appetite for his science as a sheer mania. And yet I notice that of old, in fact almost always, the highest literary distinction and renown have been sought from that science. Certainly Pythagoras, Empedocles, Democritus and Plato went overseas to learn it, going into exile rather than on a journey, taught it openly on their return, and considered it one of their most treasured secrets...

Jones, *Ibid.*, pp. 283–285; cf. Boyce-Grenet, 1991, pp. 553 f.

⁶ Cf. Boyce-Grenet, pp. 491 f., 524 f. for the names 'Zoroaster' and 'Osthanes' used as legitimizing labels for material that may have distantly been related to some Iranian origins.

⁷ Cf. Pliny XXX. 5.

⁸ Denkart IV. 21–28.

⁹ Denkart IV. 24–25, trans. in R.C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, New York, 1961, p. 176; M. Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism*, Manchester, 1984, p. 114.

¹⁰ Denkart IV. 24; Zaehner, pp. 175–176; Boyce, 1984, p. 114; cf. Pausanias V. 27. 5–6, on the fire priest of the Parthian period in Lydia reading from a book while tending the fire; M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, London, 2001, pp. 85–86.

This report makes one wonder about different regional practices¹¹ or even schisms in the ancient religion.¹² As noted in the previous chapter, a Zoroastrian text, *The Book of Arda Viraf*, seems to charge Alexander with this sin as well. As an agent of the evil spirit, Alexander plants the seeds of doubt in men's minds regarding religious matters.¹³

Moreover, in light of Pliny's note that, at the time of Xerxes, Osthanes' treatise had inspired Greek philosophers to travel overseas to seek learning, one may wish to re-examine accounts that Alexander sent copies of Zoroastrian books to Greece.¹⁴ Again we find a parallel between Xerxes and Alexander with regard to the effects of Iranian religious literature. In both cases, the influence of religious treatises or their derivatives moves in the direction of Iran to Greece.

Denkard's account is also relevant to this study from a different angle. It states that Darius had originally commanded that two copies of the *Avesta* and its commentary be written down and deposited in the Royal Treasury and the National Archives.¹⁵ This Darius is referred to as Dārāy son of Dārāy, which in Pahlavi and New Persian sources refers to Darius III, Alexander's contemporary. Notwithstanding the great likelihood of a clerical error, meant to portray Darius I, it is also possible to see influences from the propaganda war of Alexander and Darius affecting Denkard's report as well. Whether correct or erroneous—which itself may have been influenced by the residues of the propaganda war—the result would be that this account includes Darius in a long list of righteous Zoroastrian kings, following Vishtaspa¹⁶ as an upholder and preserver of the religion, while Alexander is seen as its destroyer.¹⁷

However, another list of kings preserved in the *Bundahishn*,¹⁸ the *Shāhnāma*¹⁹ and Tabari²⁰ states that both Darius and Alexander each ruled 14 years, while Tabari specifically designates the source on Alexander's

¹¹ Cf. Bidez & Cumont, Vol. I, p. VI.

¹² Cf. most recently F. Grenet, "An Archaeologist's Approach to Avestan Geography", eds. V.S. Curtis & S. Stewart, *Birth of the Persian Empire*, London, 2005, p. 36.

¹³ *The Book of Arda Viraf* I. 1. 13–15.

¹⁴ See Ch. XIV.

¹⁵ Denkard IV. 23; Zaehner, p. 175; Boyce, 1984, p. 114.

¹⁶ Denkard IV. 21–23; *Pahlavi Texts*, Pt. IV; *Contents of the Nasks*, trans. W.E. West, Oxford, 1892; *SBE*, Vol. 37, pp. 412–413.

¹⁷ Denkard IV. 24; West, p. 413.

¹⁸ *Bundahishn* 36. 8.

¹⁹ Ed. Mohl, pp. 1387, 1406.

²⁰ Tabari 693, 702, Vol. IV, pp. 88 f.

length of rule as a Persian tradition.²¹ This study also noted evidence that the accounts of the two kings, Darius and Alexander, were conflated in the Alexander Histories, for instance with regard to the fate of their families. One would note that in the Persian *Alexander Romance* they are brothers,²² and according to Tabari “some authorities on ancient history assert that this Alexander who fought the younger Darius was a rebellious brother of his”.²³ It is tempting to see in this characterization echoes from Cyrus the Younger’s rebellion who in earlier Achaemenid history had challenged his brother King Artaxerxes II.²⁴

Tabari also states that many Persian leaders and dignitaries who had been mistreated by Darius joined Alexander and exposed Darius’ weak points.²⁵ Similar information survives in Nizam ul-Mulk’s *Sīāsāt-Nāma*, which states that the reason for Darius’ defeat was his minister’s treason and defection to Alexander.²⁶

On the question of Alexander seizing Persian books, Tabari concurs with the Zoroastrian sources saying “they say that Alexander carried away (many) books—the learning of the Persians on the sciences, the stars, and philosophy—after they had been translated into Aramaic and then into Greek”.²⁷ Further on Tabari states “Alexander destroyed the cities, fortresses, and fire temples of the Persians. He slew their priests, and he burned their books and the archives of Darius”.²⁸

Such accounts seem to originate from a camp hostile to Alexander. However, it is noteworthy that even such a hostile camp was not immune to Alexander’s propaganda efforts, and his accounts reveal conflation with those of Darius in that they each are said to have reigned 14 years.

Alexander had endeavored to claim legitimacy in Iranian eyes as an Achaemenid king. Various contexts and instances have been noted in this study revealing this primary focus. In the same light, one may note Plutarch’s remarks on Alexander’s Fortune, where he is compared with previous Achaemenid kings, Darius I and Xerxes, and found more deserving

²¹ Tabari 702, Vol. IV, p. 94.

²² Southgat, pp. 9–10.

²³ Tabari 696, Vol. IV, p. 90.

²⁴ See Xenophon, *Anabasis*; Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*; Diodorus XIV for the accounts.

²⁵ Tabari 694, Vol. IV, p. 88.

²⁶ *Sīāsāt-Nāma*, IV, 25, ed. H. Darke, Tehran, 1994, p. 41.

²⁷ Tabari 700, Vol. IV, p. 93.

²⁸ Tabari 701, Vol. IV, p. 94.

of the Persian king's diadem.²⁹ Again the matrix of evaluation is that of Persian kingship and at stake is the Persian king's diadem.

Alexander Histories interestingly provide rare and precious glimpses of lost Iranian heroic epic cycles and narratives. One such example, in terms and descriptions approximating those in what survives in the *Shāhnāma*, was noted for the description of Iranian bravery when defending their Persian homeland against Alexander's advances. Another interesting account is the highly eulogistic patriotic description of Persia and the horrors experienced by the invaders in terms that seem to describe Zoroastrian hell.³⁰ It is suggested that this account belongs to a larger context of nationalistic praise literature aimed at edifying and censuring the would be-transgressors. Other examples of this cycle are seen in histories recorded for later Iranian periods.³¹ A prominent example in art and epic was noted to reach from the Achaemenid Court down to the *Shāhnāma* and relate a similar message of futility of design against the higher power of the king.³²

A vehicle of transmission for much of such material would have been minstrel poetry, attested in classical sources for earlier periods.³³ Darius I seems to have valued their services as well, as referred to in one of his inscriptions.³⁴ Alexander also has minstrels at his service, as Curtius notes in describing Alexander's entry into Babylon.³⁵

At some point during his campaigns, Alexander must have realized that mere military power would not suffice for establishing his rule over the Achaemenid Empire. He also had to legitimize himself in the eyes of the people, based on their cultural and religious norms. Presenting himself as a Greek/Macedonian conqueror was not acceptable as accounts of the mutiny show. In this endeavour, while he had in fact become king of the Persians,³⁶ he had alienated his own forces, thus causing their rebellion.

While the histories provide evidence of the Iranization efforts, the *Alexander Romances* portray the end result. There Alexander is not only a Persian king but even has the right genealogy reaching back to Darius I.³⁷

²⁹ Plutarch, *Moralia* 340. 8.

³⁰ See Ch. III.

³¹ Forthcoming study.

³² P. Jamzadeh, 1991b; *Id.* 2000.

³³ Athenaeus XIV. 633, on the authority of Dinons' *Persian History*.

³⁴ See Ch. VII.

³⁵ Curtius V. 1. 22: "... but also musicians with their own kind of instruments; the latter were accustomed to sing the praises of the kings".

³⁶ See Ch. IX.

³⁷ Southgate, pp. 9–10.

One would recall Justin's account that seems to ascribe a designation of the Achaemenid royal tombs to that of the Macedonians.³⁸ This account appears to have been influenced by a similar enterprise of providing Alexander with an Achaemenid pedigree. Echoes of the same endeavor may be seen in the considerable stress found in the histories on Alexander's relationship with Darius' mother, especially where she is referred to as Alexander's mother and she calls him "another Darius".³⁹ Although, as noted earlier, examination of the genre of *Alexander Romance* requires a separate study, it is possible to state in passing that the Alexander Histories show the early stages of that genre, with the Iranians having played a significant role in its development.

At the same time, however, one can note the intrusion of a hand inverting the effects of certain propaganda motifs. One example is Alexander's misunderstanding the portent of the 'two suns' motif which would have held a significant place in Iranian kingship ideology.⁴⁰ Another example is the incident of the Susa throne in which he is portrayed as being too short for the Achaemenid throne; an enuch cries at the sight of someone placing a table under Alexander's feet.⁴¹ In other words, he is revealed as an uncouth newcomer to the Court of the Achaemenids not versed in its protocol and hence unqualified. Such twists would seem to originate from accounts designed to reverse Alexander's propaganda efforts. The audience would have been Iranian with a ready perception of the cultural nuances hinted at. Iranian involvement in the events of the period seem to have been more extensive than what is openly stated in the histories. Although no Persian historian is mentioned in the long list of Alexander historians, it is more than likely that accounts of the period were recorded locally and from a Persian perspective. One can note references to Persian historiography, for instance in Josephus, to which Persian and Macedonian histories are referred,⁴² or Dio Chrysostom stating that Persians had a different account of Darius' and Xerxes' expeditions against Greece.⁴³

³⁸ See Ch. XI.

³⁹ See Ch. I & XII.

⁴⁰ See Ch. II.

⁴¹ Curtius V. 5. 13–14.

⁴² Josephus XIV. 187: "Since many persons, however, out of enmity to us refuse to believe what has been written about us by Persians and Macedonians because these writings are not found everywhere (a variant has 'no longer') and are not deposited even in public places but are found only among us and some other barbarian peoples", trans. R. Marcus, Loeb, 1966, Vol. 7, pp. 547–549.

⁴³ Dio Chrysostom XI. 148.

Elsewhere the same author refers to Persian books on literature.⁴⁴ Strabo also refers to the ancient history of the Persians and notes that they tend to incorporate myths into their histories.⁴⁵

Furthermore, on the existence of different histories among the Persians, it is interesting to compare two notes recorded by Romans regarding Persian claims to their ancestral territories. Artabanus the Parthian king claims "old frontiers of the Persian and Macedonian empires, promising to seize the lands that Cyrus and Alexander had ruled".⁴⁶ While Artaxerxes the Sasanian king on conquering the Parthian empire claims it as his inheritance received from the Achaemenids who had ruled since the time of Cyrus down to that of "Darius the last of the Persian kings, whose kingdom Alexander of Macedon has destroyed".⁴⁷ One will note that these two accounts have a different perception of Alexander's place in Iranian history. For the Parthian king, he is included in the list of Persian kings, following Cyrus' lineage. However, for the Sasanian king, the Persian line of descent breaks after Darius III, to be claimed later by himself. In his view Alexander is merely a destroyer, similar to the perception of Alexander in Zoroastrian literature. It is possible to assume the existence of different histories in the two Iranian royal houses. Most probably they had been compiled by Iranian historians. For the Achaemenid period, an interesting note survives in Diodorus, upon the authority of Ctesias: "Now Ctesias says that from the royal records, in which the Persians in accordance with a certain law of theirs kept an account of their ancient affairs, he carefully investigated the facts about each king, and when he had composed his history he published it to the Greeks."⁴⁸ One may also note that Herodotus, father of history, begins his book by referring to Persian histories.⁴⁹

Alexander's Persian historiographers would have continued the same tradition, albeit from different perspectives, characteristic of his period.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* IV. 30: "They have the notion that he who knows the most literature, Persian or Greek or Syrian or Phoenician, and has read the most books is the wisest and best educated person", trans. J.W. Cohoon, Loeb, 1932, Vol. I, p. 181.

⁴⁵ Strabo XI. 6. 2: "... nor has much credit been given to the ancient history of the Persians or Medes or Syrians, on account of the credulity of the historians and their fondness for myths", Vol. 5, p. 247; cf. Strabo I. 2. 1 on the Parthians' contribution to Geography; cf. Pliny VI. 124 on different Persian writers of Geography.

⁴⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* VI. 31, trans. M. Grant, London, 1963, p. 210.

⁴⁷ Herodian VI. 2, trans. C.R. Whittaker, Loeb, 1970, Vol. 2, p. 91; cf. Dio Cassius LXXX. 4.

⁴⁸ Diodorus II. 32. 4, trans. C.H. Oldfather, Loeb, 1933, Vol. I, p. 459.

⁴⁹ Herodotus I. 1, 2, trans. A.D. Godley, Loeb, 1931, Vol. I, pp. 3-5; trans. A. de Selincourt, Penguin, 1980, p. 41.

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